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CHOLLERTON;

A TALE OF OUR OWN TIMES.

BY

A LADY.

LONDON:

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.

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CHOLLERTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE village of Chollerton was prettily situated on the north-east coast of England; the county matters not, for, let me give indications of the locale with the most precise detail, I fear my description would not be recognised. Suffice it, therefore, to affirm that Chollerton possessed the rare advantage of being well wooded, while it could boast of forming part of the shore of the German Ocean. Chollerton had much else to be proud of, too; it possessed a fine old church, which only needed to be brought under the influence of the lately-revived good taste and right feeling of the age for its interior to elevate and soothe the heart of the worshipper within, as much as the external aspect of the time-honoured edifice gratified the taste of the passing lover of ecclesiastical architecture without.

Chollerton—gay, smiling, peaceful Chol-

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lerton—had none of the many evils which so often afflict a village on the sea-shore ; it was not a fashionable bathing-place, with its staring, new-looking, miscalled reading-room, and its idly lounging frequenters, whose penance it seems to be ever to be seeking pleasure, and ever finding ennui ; it was not a sea-fishing place, with its squalid cottages and rude harsh-mannered inhabitants, whose wants, spiritual and temporal, appear the more loudly to call for relief the more their reckless life renders it difficult to afford it. No, Chollerton had all that we most like to contemplate in an English village—a well-endowed Rectory, a handsome old Hall, with a resident Squire, a clean, healthy-looking, well-attended school, sundry pretty houses of more or less pretensions, a village-green highly prized alike by geese and children, a rural population still happily ignorant of Chartism, Socialism, and the like, a fine old church, and the sea-shore to boot.

“ How happy I am, dearest mother,” cried Charlotte Fosdyke, as she sat with one hand fast clasped in Mrs. Fosdyke’s, and the other shielding her face from the glowing fire ; “ how very happy I am to find myself once more at home. After all, this dear room

and all its cosy, old-fashioned furniture, is worth the gaiety and racket of Brighton."

"Yet," said her father, "you were not only happy to leave Chollerton, but rather unwilling, if I mistake not, to come back to it again."

"Oh, that was because I liked Brighton excessively; and Lady Belcomb was so kind to me, I could not help being sorry to leave her, you know; but now I am here again, I feel very happy: besides, I am so glad to find you cannot do without me. I knew you would want me at every moment, dear mother, and you too, papa, if it were only to scold."

A gentle shake of the head, and a kiss on her bright face, was all Mrs. Fosdyke's answer, while her father replied with a smile,

"This time, Charlotte, your humility has led you astray,—unless Brighton has done more in the way of reforming you than I ever heard of its doing in that line, doubtless I shall find occasion to scold you, as you call it—but it was not for that express purpose that your mother wished you to return home."

"No, no, papa, that's not fair," said Charlotte; "I did not say mama wanted me to come home to be scolded; you wanted me to

scold when I am too merry, and mama wanted me to pet when—when shall I say?—all day long, I believe," added she, turning quickly and throwing both arms round her mother's neck.

"My dearest," said she, "be steady for a moment, and hear what your father has to say."

"What you have to say, papa? Have you really anything to tell me—any reason for making me come home beyond not being able to do without me? Well, I'm sorry for that, too, but still I am very fond of events; so now I'm listening very gravely, for you positively look as if something had happened."

"What has happened, my dear child, you know already; what is going to take place I will tell you, and I hope you will hear it with your usual kindness of heart, and without your usual disposition to trifle. You have heard me speak of my cousin, Mrs. Marsden, though you never saw her."

"Oh, yes; is it not for her we were in mourning some weeks' since?"

"Yes. She has left one daughter about your own age, without a father, without brother, without sister. Mrs. Marsden in

her will commends her to my care, and begs me to act as her guardian. Circumstances which totally separated us during her life prevented her asking me if I would undertake this charge, but she judged me rightly in thinking that after her death I would befriend her child. Your mother has written to poor Anna, telling her she will find a home under our roof, a mother in herself, and a sister in you, Charlotte. What say you: will you try to fulfil her promise?"

"Indeed I think I shall love her. Poor thing! how sadly alone she stands. If she will let me, I am sure I shall love her; but tell me, papa, if Mrs. Marsden knew you well enough to confide her daughter to your care, why have we never seen her?"

"I will show you Anna's letter, and you may judge from that if she is inclined to let you love her," said Mr. Fosdyke, leaving the room without replying to her last question.

"Do not again ask your father why we have never seen Mrs. Marsden," said Mrs. Fosdyke, hastily, after she had ceased to hear her husband's receding footsteps. "There was some quarrel," she added, "and such things are always painful to recur to, espe-

cially where death has cut off the power of reconciliation. You must love this poor girl, my Charlotte," continued she; " her forlorn condition will incline you to do so in the first instance; and if she prove as amiable as her letter shows her, we shall soon love her for her own sake."

"Yes, mother dearest, I will love her; first for her sorrow's sake, and because you bid me. I will love her as a sister, but then you must promise me you will not love her as a daughter. Promise me, mother—promise me," added she, eagerly.

"Charlotte!" exclaimed Mrs. Fosdyke, "can you be jealous? I never saw anything of jealousy in you before."

"How could you, mother? Have you not always loved me best of all things; has not my brother, and my dear father too, though he is grave sometimes? do not I know he loves me beyond all else? Though I never have been jealous, I feel here, in my very heart, that I could be. Oh, heaven grant I may never have cause to be."

"Heaven grant it in truth, my child; it is the fault of a little mind, Do not fear that your mother will ever give cause to draw it forth."

Charlotte impetuously dashed away a tear from her eye, and turned towards her father, who at that moment re-entered the room with an open letter in his hand.

“Let me read it myself,” said she, eagerly; “I can guess something of her from her writing. It’s rather precise-looking, don’t you think, mother? but it shows character, and I am determined to like her.”

“Still judging from externals in every thing, Charlotte,” said Mr. Fosdyke. “Why do you not read the letter you stand contemplating? that would give you more rational grounds for forming an opinion of her, though I am far from wishing she should be prejudged in any way.”

Charlotte approached the table without replying, and hastily cast her eyes over the paper: it was not long, and when she had read it, she exclaimed in a tone of much feeling, “Dear Anna! with what gratitude for the kindness offered to her she writes, and yet there is such simplicity in her letter—not a word too much, but it seems so truthful—I feel at once she writes from her heart.”

“I am glad her letter impresses you, love, as it did your father and myself; but while

we are talking of our young cousin, I must not forget that you are a traveller, and must want some tea after your journey."

And a cheerful happy trio they were, as they sat round their tea table, which was spread rather more substantially than was usual at Fosdyke Lodge.

Never was an only daughter more devotedly loved than was our merry-hearted Charlotte. A casual observer might have thought that she was an object of more engrossing tenderness to her gentle mother than to her father; but Charlotte knew and gloried in knowing that it was not so. True it was, he sometimes checked her too exuberant vivacity, and often deplored and occasionally reproved her impetuosity of feeling, and precipitancy of action; but in truth her gay light-heartedness and joyous spirit formed the brightness of his life: he knew it was the gaiety of an innocent heart—the joyousness of a spirit untamed by adversity or grief of any kind, and he trembled as he thought how soon sorrow and the taint of the world might take the lightness from her step, and dim the brightness of her glance.

Mr. Fosdyke was a religious man, as the world esteems religion. Three corners of

his square well-cushioned pew in the parish church might be seen, provided the high crimson curtains were sufficiently drawn back on the bright brass poles, filled twice every Sunday by himself, his wife and daughter, and a goodly row of servants were constantly drawn up behind them. Yes, Mr. Fosdyke was a religious man on a Sunday, and was duly so esteemed in Chollerton and its neighbourhood, but there seemed, to all outward appearances, for we judge not the thoughts, to be an end of the subject, as the last servant defiled through the dining-room doors after prayers on Sunday evening, till the first entered the same room for the same purpose on the following Sunday morning.

We must not be surprised, then, if he never endeavoured to temper and subdue his daughter's faults, or to draw forth and strengthen what was good in her disposition, by early turning her thoughts to higher objects than the world affords, or to teach her that a Christian has a more holy end in view than to live here in the innocent enjoyment of temporal blessings. He trembled as he watched her unbroken happiness, because his worldly experience proved to him that such is not the lasting lot of mortals, and he feared

lest sorrow should come near her—he trembled not because his Christian knowledge told him that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth”—nor feared lest her heart should need the discipline of suffering, and that rejoicing in prosperity, she should forget the All-bountiful Giver of it. Neither from her mother did Charlotte learn to look upon life with soberness and truth: hers was a butterfly existence, all bright and gay at its opening, and she gave not a thought to its close.

* * * * *

At last the long tea-drinking, where much had been said, and but little eaten, was brought to a close.

Charlotte enquired when her cousin was expected? Not till Friday evening—three whole days! how provoking it was not sooner! But no; she was very glad of it—she had a thousand arrangements to make in reparation. Mr. Fosdyke knew of none but what concerned the housemaid.

“Oh, papa, you don’t understand!—you can’t know all I shall have to do myself. First of all, then, we must settle what room she is to have. I should like her to have

Arthur's old room, he has never used it since he went to Oxford; and that opens into my dressing-room. I will have that door opened, and it shall be called my dressing-room no longer, but our boudoir—that shall be our common property, where we will meet to talk our secrets, practise our songs, and arrange our worsted work. She may have the Blue-room, mama, may she not?"

When did Mrs. Fosdyke ever say no to a request of Charlotte's? The Blue-room was appropriated to Miss Marsden. Certainly no apartment could be better selected to make her feel on her arrival that she was a welcome guest, and that it was intended she should be the cherished friend of the kind-hearted Charlotte.

Anna Marsden and the arrangements that were to be made for her comforts—Charlotte's hope that she should not find her too grave, and fears that she should be thought too giddy, together with her numerous speculations as to whether she were tall or short, fat or thin, seemed well nigh endless.

"Oh, mama!" exclaimed she in rather a saddened tone, "if she should turn out fat and red-haired, I shall be so sorry she has got

Arthur's room, and that she is to share the boudoir with me. Do you think she has red hair, papa?"

"Her mother was a singularly beautiful woman, and I have heard that Miss Marsden somewhat resembles her."

This was said very gravely, and no one spoke for some moments. Charlotte soon, however, broke the unwonted silence, asking,

"When is Arthur coming home?" He was expected from Oxford in about a month. "How glad I shall be to see him again, though he does always seem to think me rather more than half wild. I wonder sometimes how it happens that I am so fond of him, grave as he is; and I wonder always, that is when I have time to think of it, that he should love me so very dearly, for I am sure he thinks me very wicked. I wonder how he will like Anna."

Mrs. Fosdyke here suggested that Charlotte had made a long journey, and must be tired, and as there seemed nothing more to say about the expected guest, she consented to retire to rest.

CHAPTER II.

THE following morning rose bright and beautiful, but Charlotte would not be tempted from the house either by the warm sunshine, or the consciousness that the Miss Rileys would think it strange the first day of her return to Chollerton should pass without her showing herself at Westdale Cottage, and that her old godmother, Mrs. Travers, would feel herself ill-used by the same neglect. Charlotte's heart was not a particularly narrow one, but it never seemed quite capable of containing comfortably more than one feeling at once. At the present moment Anna Marsden reigned triumphant; and her father, had he witnessed her energetic proceedings throughout the day, must have been forced to confess that the preparations for the comfort of the expected guest rested, whether necessarily or not is another question, but he must have confessed that they practically rested chiefly with his daughter.

The furniture of the bed-room was arranged as much as possible to resemble her own

room. She did not like the book shelves belonging to the Blue-room, they were not large enough for the supposed wants of a resident. She had great doubts as to the eligibility of the wardrobe which had kept its station unmolested from time immemorial—but on the possibility of effecting a change here, the housekeeper, who held chief sway in such matters at Chollerton Lodge, put a very decided negative; so Charlotte agreed to a compromise, and consented to allow the wardrobe to remain, provided another looking-glass were substituted for the one belonging to the room; she was sure it was not a becoming one—she almost thought she looked ugly in it herself.

At last, after great exertion, all her arrangements in that department were brought to a satisfactory close, and the room, which was perfectly comfortable when she began to work her will upon it, remained perfectly comfortable still; and that was quite as much as could be desired, and perhaps rather more than could reasonably have been expected.

She next proceeded to the cheerful little sitting-room which separated Anna's room from her own; here her superabundant activity found more scope. In times gone by

it had been called Miss Fosdyke's school-room, but at last it lost that appellation, and became Miss Fosdyke's dressing-room. Here it was that her most intimate friends were admitted when there were weighty matters to be discussed—here had an influential body of the female aristocracy of Chollerton met in secret conclave to determine the uniform to be worn by a late set of fair toxopholites—here had the same number of damsels discussed with an eagerness, in some cases amounting almost to vehemence, the propriety of giving a white or a maroon ground to the *tapis d'amitié* that was to be presented to Miss Belcomb on her marriage—here—may I venture to disclose it?—did Charlotte secrete herself when the versification fit was on her. In short, it was her most private sanctuary, but she was now resolved that Anna should share it with her; and all the little devices for her comfort or convenience she determined should, if possible, be doubled,—if that could not be, banished. A piano, a *chaise longue*, and some book shelves that had gradually been added so that they might receive her increasing treasures, till now they stretched along the whole end of the room, were the only articles that had been allowed

to remain without a duplicate. Two small writing tables were placed in the deep bay window before two luxurious-looking easy chairs; a little footstool lay before each; a long narrow table stood on either side of the fireplace; they were not precisely similar in shape or size—moreover, one was of rose-wood and the other of mahogany, but this, though deeply deplored for about a moment and a half, did not greatly mar the air of comfort and ease which pervaded the room.

It was impossible to watch Charlotte through this busy day without loving her for her eager desire to make her orphaned cousin feel she was entering a home as a welcome inmate, and when at last she joined her father and mother, looking rather paler than usual, in the drawing-room just before dinner, it was with a very gentle reprimand for having over-fatigued herself that she was received.

“I have made every thing quite ready I think, now,” said she, as she ensconced herself in the corner of a sofa. “I only wish she were coming to-night, or perhaps to-morrow morning; I am almost too tired to-night for the excitement of seeing her, but to wait till Friday evening is too provoking.”

“It is better you should have a day or two for your imagination to cool, Lotte,” said her father; “to-day I know you have been very busy, but I hope you won’t let to-morrow pass without going to the Lawn. I met Mrs. Travers returning from her drive just now, and she expressed some astonishment at not having seen you this morning, but I made her forgive you by saying you would certainly be with her to-morrow, and would then tell her of an impending event.”

“Oh, papa, did you say that? That’s charming; how she will spend this whole evening speculating about it—an impending event! Of course she will think I am going to be married. I dare say by this time she has determined what she will give me on my wedding-day.”

And Charlotte laughed as heartily as if two moments before she had not declared she was too tired to speak.

The next morning Charlotte affirmed that it was of primal importance she should make her appearance at the Lawn within five minutes of the time at which Mrs. Travers entered her drawing-room, which was punctually at eleven o’clock.

“It would be too shocking if my dear godmother were to fidget herself into a fit because I was a little later than she expected; she always likes me to be there a little after she comes down stairs, and if she has been thinking all night of the impending event, papa, she will be more impatient than ever. Will you order the pony-carriage for me—I suppose James can go with me?”

Her father’s hand was on the bell—

“Stay a moment, Mr. Fosdyke,” said his wife, “I really think it is too cold for you, my love; cannot you stay till after lunch, and then I will go with you in the close carriage?”

“Oh, mama,” cried Charlotte, “what will Mrs. Travers say, if I don’t go till after lunch? and you know, dearest mother, a drive in the pony-carriage always does me good—only I never want any good of that sort—it never gave me cold in my life, and I want to see my pony again, it’s so long since I drove him—and I should stop for one moment at Westdale Cottage to tell the Rileys I will see them to-morrow perhaps—and I want to show my new dog to Mrs. Travers, and you don’t like me to take dogs

in the carriage with you—and Mrs. Travers will not be pleased at my only paying her a common half-hour's visit."

These manifold reasons for following her own plans were poured forth with wonderful rapidity, and finished with an appealing glance at her father. Charlotte's reasoning was always conclusive with her mother, so her objection was withdrawn. The bell was rung, and the pony-carriage ordered to be at the door precisely at a quarter past ten.

"Exactly," added Charlotte as the servant left the room. "Suppose, mama," continued she, rising from the breakfast table, "you were to come and fetch me from the Lawn after lunch; I can send back the pony by James, and that will enable me with a good grace to decline staying the whole day with Mrs. Travers, for you know she always asks me to stay and dine with her, and I don't want to do so to-day so very soon after coming home."

This proposal pleased Mrs. Fosdyke much, and she promised to come and claim her soon after three o'clock.

The carriage drove up to the door, and Charlotte walked through the hall at the same moment—her father issued from his

library to put her into it, and her mother threw up the drawing-room window to beseech her to wrap herself up warmly.

If any equipage was ever suited to be driven by a lady, it was the one which exclusively belonged to Miss Fosdyke. It was altogether a tiny concern—the carriage was hardly larger or higher than a garden chair, the pony, not above twelve hands high, was quite black, and the white reins seemed almost too slight even to guide so quiet-looking a steed. Charlotte's little figure, too, though somewhat concealed now by her fur cloak, was quite in keeping with the turn-out. Her attendant squire was not on so diminutive a scale. He was a stalwart sturdy-looking man, mounted on an iron-grey horse, and formed a striking contrast to the lady and the equipage, whose special attendant it was his chief honour to consider himself.

Charlotte stepped gaily into the little carriage, gathered up the reins, smiled an adieu to her father, waved her hand to her mother, and was off in a moment. She was soon in the village, and then she had many friendly greetings to return from old and young. More than one tidy-looking dame took her hands from the wash-tub, or suspended her

broom in the air, to come forward and express a hope that she had returned well and happy to Chollerton, and many a child stayed its gambols to curtsey her a welcome home again; for Charlotte, if neither very wise nor very consistent in her efforts to benefit her poorer neighbours, had always a kind heart ready to sympathize with, and an open hand willing, as far as she was able, to relieve their difficulties.

At about half a mile from the Lodge she stopped at a small, unpretending-looking cottage. It was undeniably a cottage, and nothing more, but it had an air of comfort and prettiness about it that could not fail to catch the fancy and please the taste. Miss Fosdyke threw the reins to the servant, who was at her side so quickly, as to show that he was well used to the manœuvre. She lightly sprang to the ground, and passed the low gate which stood but a few yards from the house.

She had scarcely touched the bell when the door was opened, and the arms of Louisa Riley were around her before she had perceived that her summons had not been answered by the servant.

“I half expected you, dearest Charlotte,”

said Louisa, "and have been watching for you ever since ten, as I know you are somewhat early in your movements. But why does the pony wait; you are come for a good long chat—are you not?"

"No, indeed, Louisa, I am not, though I have a thousand things to say; I only came in for an instant to tell you I long to have an hour's talk with you, but that I cannot stay for a moment. Where is Mary? and your mother? I must just ask her how she has borne my absence, and then run away again."

"Mama and Mary are in the drawing-room," returned Louisa, "and will scold me for keeping you here so long."

As she spoke she opened a door into a room which had the same pervading air of unostentatious comfort that distinguished the outside of the house. Mrs. Riley was seated in a most easy-looking easy chair, dressed in the neatest, simplest black gown and white cap imaginable. Call on Mrs. Riley when you would—the first thing after breakfast, the last moment before she retired to her bed-room—and you always found her precisely in the same spot, and dressed precisely in the same manner.

She always had a small work-table on her left hand, which was covered with the apparatus of needle-work, but nobody could say that they ever saw Mrs. Riley working. Nevertheless, it was strongly suspected by those who knew her best that she did work sometimes, as she was never known in the two and twenty years she had lived at Cholleton to do anything for show.

She was a mild, gentle-tempered looking person, yet those who rightly read the physiognomy might perceive no little strength of character and power of endurance in the expression of the mouth and chin. You would have guessed her to have seen some sixty summers, but in truth she was not much more than fifty. Sorrow and suffering had given her a more aged look than she had a right to wear, and her peculiar dress contributed to the deception.

Her history was a sad one, but too devoid of incident to excite the compassion of the little world in which she moved; and she had, moreover, borne her grief so silently, that, of those nearest and dearest to her, but one knew that her life had been divided into three most unequal portions—an anxious heart-wearing morning, a brief bright noon,

followed by a dark evening, overshadowed by clouds which could not pass away.

She was scarcely beyond childhood before she was engaged to be married to a man whom she had even then loved some years. They had each a loving heart, and each a buoyant spirit; but love and hope, though valuable accessories in their way, will not produce the necessities of life. Beyond these she had nothing, and he was a lieutenant in the Navy, without a visible chance of promotion. For twelve long years they lived on from day to day, hoping against hope. Mary Fairfax grew paler and thinner; her eye lost its brightness, and her step its elasticity; she sadly marked and deeply mourned her waning beauty, though she well knew that it was not for that he had loved her. No thought of vanity had ever sullied her mind, as she endeavoured, year after year, to preserve for him the loveliness she only prized because he loved to look upon it. Year after year passed away, and each time they met, after a long and dreary absence, she felt she had lost something of what used once to charm him. But at last happier days arose. A scarcely known and long forgotten relation died, and

left a small property worth about four hundred a year, to Mr. Riley. He immediately returned to claim her; and in his exuberant joy at having at last a home to offer her, even her watchful glance could detect no regret at the change time and sorrow had wrought in her. They were married, and after three short years of nearly unmixed happiness, she was left a widow with two little girls.

Since her husband's death she had never quitted Chollerston. It was there she had found all she had ever known of happiness, and there she now wished to live and die.

During the short time that Mr. Riley had lived there, the young couple had been so exclusively wrapped up in each other, that their acquaintance with the neighbourhood had in no instance ripened into friendship; and when his unexpected death left her in a most lonely state, she could not be persuaded to do more than gratefully reject all the proffered kindness of those around her. For a few years she was never seen except at church, or walking, and that was but rarely, accompanied by her little girls. Time flew by, and suddenly she remembered that Mary and Louisa would soon be

no longer children, and that for them companionship was necessary. Her acquaintance was soon renewed with the Fosdykes, Lady Belcomb, and the Rectory. She still declined all invitations for herself, but always rejoiced at her daughters being noticed ; and as they were both attractive girls in their way, they were warmly welcomed at all the fêtes, great and small, that were given in the neighbourhood.

Mary Riley, who was now just one-and-twenty, had perceived from very early childhood that her mother's life had not been a happy one, and it had been the one great aim of her existence to soothe and comfort her by the fondest affection and most devoted watchfulness. Louise was just a year younger, and not being gifted with a perception so keen or affections so acute as her sister's, she had less understood and less sympathized with her mother.

Charlotte, whom we left entering the room, was quietly but cordially greeted by both mother and daughter.

“ Thank you, dear Mrs. Riley,” exclaimed she, “ but positively I cannot stay a moment, though I have a hundred things to say, and if you will spare me one of your companions

for an hour, I shall be delighted. It's a charming morning," added she, turning rather to Mary as she spoke, "and if one of you will drive with me as far as the Lawn, and undertake to bring the pony back safe, we can have a little talk by the way."

"I shall like it of all things," cried Louisa; "Mary, will you go, or shall I?"

"You had better go, Louy, as I am just reading to mama, and my talk with you, Charlotte, must be deferred till another day. Perhaps my patience now, may be rewarded by having a longer one afterwards."

"Very well, so be it," said Charlotte; "only don't be a moment putting on your bonnet, Louisa."

But in spite of this injunction, Charlotte had time to compliment Mrs. Riley on her gay display of early spring flowers, to assure her that the sun always shone more brightly into her room than into any other in the parish, to run her fingers over the keys of an open piano, and to extract from Mary a promise of an early visit on the next day, and then hearing Louisa's step in the passage, she hastily bade them adieu, and was again quickly seated in her little carriage with her friend by her side.

"I am afraid, Lotte dearest," began her companion, "you did not get my last letter. You have returned so unexpectedly, that it must have crossed you on the road; and I wanted so much to be the first to tell you of the new arrival we are looking for."

"How very odd," said Charlotte, almost stopping the pony in her surprise; "how very odd you should know anything about her. Papa told me he had not mentioned it to any one."

"Oh, but I did not hear it from Mr. Fosdyke, that I remember," returned her friend; "but everybody in the parish has been talking of it for the last three days: only the gossip confines itself pretty much to him, nobody knows or cares anything about her; though for my part I am not sure that it is not quite as important what she is like, particularly to us ladies."

"What can you mean, Louisa?" and the pony was brought to a decided stand-still; "what *him* are you talking about? and what can the good people have found to gossip about in the affair?"

"Why, really, Charlotte," said Louisa, laughing, "I should have thought that even you, who always vow you detest gossip,

might have allowed us to speculate upon what sort of man our new Rector is; and silly as you may think it, you must be sure that he cannot take possession of the living without being well talked about: but the best of it is, that nobody knows anything of him, and the people who care about such things are in such a fuss to make out if he is high or low church. Some say he is a thorough-bred Puseyite—I should not dare use the word even, if your brother were here—others maintain that he had a fashionable chapel in London once, and is of the Mac-Neile school; but all that I know, or that I fancy anybody knows, is, that his name is Dampierre, the Rev. Philip Dampierre, and that there is a Mrs. Dampierre, and two or three juvenile Dampierres not old enough to be any acquisition."

"Now, my dear," returned Charlotte, "as I have listened thus patiently to all this history of yours, which seems to amount to nothing after all, I hope you are ready to hear in return a piece of news that is vastly more interesting to me than if a dozen new Rectors were coming to Chollerton, and I should think, too, it must be rather more interesting to you;" and then followed, as

fast as she could tell it, allowing for sundry interruptions occasioned by Louisa's exclamations, a full account of her cousin, and her projected arrival. She told her friend all she knew of her, and all she conjectured, even to the fact of her fearing her handwriting was a little too precise to please her. She meant to have suppressed this important item in the history, but Charlotte never kept back anything, when the flood-gates of her eloquence were once fairly opened.

"Well, dear love," said Louisa, with something approaching to a sigh when the narration was concluded, "I earnestly hope—that is, I sincerely wish—" Louisa Riley piqued herself upon being correct in her expression,—"I sincerely wish her residence with you may prove a source of happiness to you; for it cannot be denied if it is not that, it must be more than a great annoyance. I hope you will not find her cold and formal—one of your very correct young ladies, whose every look is a reproof to those who are less calculatingly sedate than herself. I think a great deal of character may be seen in the handwriting; and I am sorry, very sorry, dear Lotte, that you, with all your wonderful penetration, should think it precise and pedantic-looking."

“Oh, Louisa ! now you are running away with my mole-hill, and making it a mountain of your own. I did not say it was pedantic-looking.”

“Well, Lotte, say precise, which was your own word. It comes to the same thing. I am sure it is very unselfish in me to hope she may not turn out detestable; for if she is a dear, warm-hearted, generous, affectionate creature like yourself, you will be sure to make her your great friend, and I shall soon be forgotten,” and here the tender-hearted Louisa began to weep a little.

“I can’t well forget you long,” said Charlotte, laughing, “living, as we do, within half a mile of each other; and if I have such a fine large heart as you make out, perhaps it will hold more than one friend. Indeed,” added she, more gravely, “I hope it does that already. I should be very odious if dear Mary had not a warm nook there.”

CHAPTER III.

THE two friends had now reached the entrance gates of the Lawn, as Mrs. Travers's beautiful place was called, and Charlotte said she would walk up to the house, as Louisa Riley was well aware she was no great favourite with Mrs. Travers, and did not therefore wish to drive up to the door. Louisa held her by the hand to pour out a few last words, when the great stable clock struck eleven.

“Oh let me go!” cried Charlotte, “or Mrs. Travers will not find me in the drawing-room,” and she ran lightly up the avenue, having disengaged herself of the weightiest of her wraps. She reached the hall steps panting, and out of breath, but was rewarded for her exertion by hearing that her godmother had not yet come down stairs. She had time to enter the drawing-room, throw aside her bonnet, and coil herself up in a very enjoyable sort of way in the corner of a sofa before the door opened, and the lady of the mansion entered.

Mrs. Travers was the very smallest, dain-

tiest looking old lady in England. She had been from her childhood the indulged pet of Dame Fortune, and pretty nearly every one she had come in contact with through life had contributed something to the spoiling of her—every one, perhaps, except her husband.

Mrs. Travers had been an heiress, a beauty, and a wit. She had prided herself upon her fortune not at all, on her beauty a little, but a great deal on her wit. Entering life under so bright a combination of circumstances, she naturally looked for a vast deal of attention, and was in no wise astonished at finding herself the admired of all admirers. But though sought after by the rich and the noble, the high in birth and the distinguished in intellect, she took it into her head to form a love match with a young man remarkable for none of these good gifts, but who possessed a singularly fine figure, a perfect address, and a charming tenor voice, with which, in conjunction with his fine eyes, he made sad havoc among the hearts of the fair sex. But it did not answer—Mrs. Travers could not listen to her husband's singing all day, even if he had not soon found out that singing to his wife was a considerable

bore—and not many years after her marriage she openly declared herself a convert to Mrs. Malaprop's notion, that "it is safest to begin with a little aversion." Being both well-bred, and in a certain degree sensible people, they got on together as well as could be expected—polite to each other in public, and contriving as little as might be to interfere with each other in private—nevertheless, in spite of all this good management, Mrs. Travers felt it to be no slight relief when her husband's death left her more completely to her own devices. She had now enjoyed her widowhood about five and twenty years, and was at the present time as gay, as happy, and as whimsical an old lady of seventy as could be wished for.

"My dearest little Lotte," cried Mrs. Travers, as Charlotte bounded from the sofa, and ran across the room to meet her, "this is charming of you—you are brighter than a sunbeam, more refreshing than my first bunch of spring violets;" and the cherished little blossoms which she carried in one hand were tossed upon the nearest table—a volume which she held in the other was disposed of with as little ceremony, and Charlotte received a warm embrace from her kind old friend.

“I was rather angry with you yesterday, dear one, when I met your father, and heard you had been four and twenty hours in Chollerton, after an absence of two months, without finding your way to the Lawn, and I believe I launched out a little as you know I do sometimes—at least my enemies say so; but your father scolded me outrageously, and said I was an unreasonable old soul, or something tantamount to it.”

“And then,” replied Charlotte, laughing, “he came home and scolded me, doubtless still more vigorously, for not having tried to see you; but you positively must not be angry with me, dearest Mrs. Travers, for coming to see you yesterday was not within the verge of possibility; I was so actually hard at work all day.”

“You know, child, I never am angry with you when I see your saucy little face, and that it is which makes you take such abominable liberties with me. Now establish yourself in your favourite *bergère*—your own footstool is close to it—and tell me this wonderful history I have been promised; but stay, you must first give me two or three of those new books to cut, I shall not be half comfortable unless my fingers are occupied;

and my poor violets, too, I don't see why they should be discarded."

"But you must let my fingers be occupied, too, if I am to be happy," said Charlotte, as she rose to do her godmother's bidding.

"I suppose I shall find every thing in its usual place," added she, drawing towards the chair an exquisite little work-table; and opening it she began to work, as if the canvass and the wools had been only laid aside half an hour since.

"Now, my dear godmother, tell me, please, of what nature and complexion do you conceive my news to be? I am sure you have invented some little romance of which I am the heroine—a love tale of course—don't you suspect I am going to confide to you some touching *affaire de cœur*—don't you think I have given my heart irrecoverably to some irresistible monster of perfection, and perhaps papa won't hear of it, and I am come to implore you to use your influence with him, and prevent him from dooming his only daughter to a life of hopeless, endless misery?"

These last words were spoken in a most touching accent—her hands hung listlessly by her side—her head drooped sadly on her shoulder—her long eyelashes seemed to hide

her rising tears—but the merry dimple still played about her mouth, and utterly destroyed her personification of a love-lorn damsel.

“ For mercy’s sake, Lotte, don’t talk such stuff, or you will drive me up stairs to my dressing-room again. I suppose you are not wiser than your neighbours, and the time will come when you will fancy yourself in love, as it is called; but I hope I may be spared the sight of it for some few years, and if you can contrive to put off making a fool of yourself in that way till I am dead and gone, I should take it as an amazingly kind attention.”

“ Oh, very well!—it’s rather hard upon me, I think, but I will do anything to please you; so I will dismiss my eternal attachment to the winds. There!” added she, after a deep sigh, “ now I am quite heart-whole again, and I will tell you the impending event, as papa calls it.”

And for the second time that morning, Charlotte Fosdyke gave a detailed account of what had happened, and what was about to happen with regard to Miss Marsden. The old lady listened in profound silence, and continued most perseveringly to cut the

leaves of the volume she held, for some moments after the relation had come to a close.

“ Well, dear Mrs. Travers, I am all impatience to hear what you say about it.”

“ In truth, my dear, I ought to say nothing, for I don’t think it a very wise plan, and I believe I ought not to tell your father’s daughter, that I think he is acting very foolishly.”

“ How foolishly? What evil can come from his kindness to her? It is not as if he were adopting a penniless girl for whom he would have to provide; and even in that case you are too generous yourself to call that a folly. But Anna has, I believe, a very good fortune.”

“ No, no, child, I am not thinking of the pounds, shillings, and pence: your father, too, could very well afford to provide for her in that way without hurting himself or you either. But I see a number of troubles in the distance, great and small, which this proceeding will or may bring upon him. How can he tell that you may like her well enough to wish to live in the same house with her? How can he tell that Arthur may not like her too well not to wish to do so always?”

“Dearest Mrs. Travers,” cried Charlotte, laughing, “considering you always vow there is not a spark of romance in your disposition, it is marvellous, strikingly so, how your mind invariably turns to the suggestion and contemplation of love troubles. And why should they not marry, supposing they do fall in love, which certainly is not impossible, for papa says she is thought very handsome, and certainly nobody can be more agreeable and attractive than Arthur?”

“That would not quite suit your father’s fancy for Arthur, I suspect. I have heard she is very lovely, and like her mother, whom I knew well. Did you ever hear Mrs. Marsden’s history, Lotte?”

“No, indeed! I half guessed she had a history from what mama hinted the other evening; but I had not time then to ask what she meant, and I have been too busy since in thinking of the daughter to remember my curiosity touching the mother.”

“Don’t ask your mother about it at all, Lotte. It is a painful story, and one she does not love to think of. Some day I will tell you the whole affair; you shall see and judge of Anna first. And now let us talk

of something else. When does your new Rector come to Chollerton? His arrival will create a sensation which will do a vast deal of good, for we have been growing a little sleepy of late. Report says Miss Louisa Riley has been seen with a book in her hand by the side of her mother, from sheer want of some tittle-tattle to carry about the village, but I can scarcely believe we are quite in so bad a plight as would appear from that."

Charlotte longed to extract the promised story from the old lady without a moment's delay, but she knew her too well to attempt it; so she wisely resolved to think as little about it as might be for the present, and replied with nearly as much animation as usual,

"Poor Louisa is no higher in your favour than of yore, I perceive. I cannot think why you dislike her so much. She does talk a good deal, certainly, but I have heard you say you detest silent girls; and she is very amusing sometimes, and very affectionate too,—I wish you judged her more justly."

"That shows how much more anxious you are that I should appear a judgementsical

old woman, than I am that you should be taken for a right-thinking young one, for I don't at all wish that you should judge her more justly than you do, though I know you are quite in the wrong about her, and will find it out some day ; but I care little when you make the discovery—her small-gossiping, self-seeking, great-people-loving ways will not contaminate you. She cannot spoil you, my dear, and you may—I am not sanguine about it—but it's just possible you may improve her ; so, savage as you think me towards her, for her sake I am willing to see your intimacy with her continue."

The two friends, for such they were, in spite of more than fifty years' difference in their ages, chatted away gaily on a hundred subjects till they were first astonished at the announcement of luncheon, and still more dismayed an hour afterwards at the sound of Mrs. Fosdyke's carriage wheels. It seemed strange, but it could not be denied, that they had been talking incessantly for more than four hours. Mrs. Travers would not let them leave her without obtaining a promise from both that the expected addition to their family should not deprive her of her god-daughter's time and attention,

CHAPTER IV.

IN due course of time the eventful Friday arrived, and brought with it the eagerly expected guest. Mr. Fosdyke met her at the hall door, led her into the drawing-room and kissed her forehead before he presented her to his wife and daughter, both of whom received her with much gentle kindness. That she was tall and very pale was all that her travelling dress and the dim twilight permitted them to discover.

“ You are heartily welcome to Fosdyke Lodge, my dear Anna,” said Mr. Fosdyke, evidently speaking with some little effort, “ I trust you will find it a happy home.”

“ Your own kind heart,” replied the young stranger, “ must suggest what I would say, for I have no words to express my gratitude.”

“ Charlotte,” said Mrs. Fosdyke who perceived that Anna was feeling more than she could well suppress, “ perhaps you may as well take your cousin at once to her room; you will soon make her feel at home if she is consigned to your care—but do not talk her

to death at first. Anna, we dine at six, so you have a good hour at your disposal."

This was said in a cheerful unconstrained tone of voice, that contributed much to restore their guest to her usual composure; for poor Anna, albeit little prone to give way to her feelings, was rather overcome by Mr. Fosdyke's parental reception of her.

"Thank you very much," said she as she moved towards Charlotte, whom she had as yet scarcely seen, though she had felt her hand kindly pressed in hers.

"Come then, Anna," said Lotte gaily, "for I am sure you must be too tired to like standing; let me take your cloak from you, for your room is a mile off. You see I call you Anna, and I suppose you know my name is Charlotte. Some people take the liberty of calling me Lotte, but I don't think I shall permit that familiarity from you till I have invented some little, diminutive, wee, tiny name to give you in return. A contraction of Anna would be something almost too short to strike the ear I am afraid, and yet Anne won't do at all."

She ran on talking too fast to receive an answer, with the good-natured intention of giving Miss Marsden time to recover herself;

and her kindness was fully appreciated by the object of it.

“What a lovely room!” exclaimed she, looking full upon the sea—“and that is the German Ocean! How grand it sounds, to look from your bedroom upon the German Ocean!”

“I am so glad you like it,” returned her cousin, “my own room has just the same view, and I am so fond of it that it was one reason for my wishing you to have this room. But I must not stay chatting with you now—let me ring for your maid, and then I will leave you and send some of your boxes up stairs. Let me give you one kiss before I go, and then we shall meet again fresh friends.”

“How kind you all are to me, dear Charlotte,” said Anna, laying aside her bonnet before she complied with the request; “I cannot feel I am among strangers.”

“No, of course not; it would be wrong if you did. Are we not cousins? That always stands for five years’ acquaintanceship, you know.”

Charlotte kissed her as she spoke, and did not feel the less inclined to love her from perceiving that her eyes were filled with tears.

“She is very unlike what I pictured to myself,” thought Charlotte, as she threw herself upon the sofa in her boudoir to meditate upon the subject until the dinner bell rang, “very different altogether—there is nothing formal or cold, certainly, and yet how self-possessed she was even when showing so much emotion—now in her position I should have thrown myself into my mother’s arms and wept torrents, not because I wanted to make a scene, but simply because I could not help it. Well, her way is the wisest, for mine would have given me the headache, and hers will enable her to dress comfortably for dinner. She is not so handsome as I expected. Mrs. Travers called her lovely—perhaps she is tired with her journey, and she was so wrapped up I could not judge much. I am glad she called me Charlotte; if she had called me Miss Fosdyke I never could have liked her. There was a tear, too, in her eye as I kissed her—and she likes her room and the view of the sea. We shall do admirably together, I am sure,” and she started up in renewed spirits; but ere she had quite reached the door of her own room they received a slight check as the idea flashed across the mind, “But suppose she should not like me.”

CHAPTER V.

DAYS flew by, and soon grew into weeks, and Anna Marsden began to feel quite domesticated and tranquil in her new home.

The two young girls, albeit their dissimilarity became day by day more visible the more narrowly they were observed, seemed rapidly growing into fast friends. Mrs. Travers came to the conclusion that if Arthur Fosdyke offered her his heart and hand, his father, all prejudice apart, ought to rejoice if they were accepted; and the aristocracy of Chollerton and its environs were, for once, very nearly unanimous in its approval of an action of one of its members. But Louisa Riley could not view Miss Marsden's installation at Fosdyke Lodge with any tranquillity of spirit; she looked upon her as a rival who crossed her at all points. Anna seemed destined by connexion and propinquity to become Charlotte's bosom friend—a position she had long felt convinced she filled. The same unfortunate circumstance might procure for her the notice and affection of Arthur, for which she had also long felt herself

a fitting object. She heard, too, Anna called the loveliest girl in the room one evening by an old gentleman whom she had been told three years ago said the same thing of her—so Louisa could not like Anna Marsden. She did not admire her person—she could not approve of her conduct. Could anything, she asked, be more unnatural than her mode of sitting almost silent for half an hour at a time, and then talking away all eagerness and animation? At one time or the other she must be grossly affected. Could anything be less attractive than her appearance, with her usual pale complexion—anything more ill-bred and unlady-like than her style of arguing and talking till her face flushed with her own vehemence? But it was in vain Louisa declaimed—in vain she pointed out her manifold defects and deficiencies; all admired, many liked, and some began to love her.

Meanwhile, Lady Belcomb had returned to Chollerton Hall; her son, Sir Edward, was daily expected to arrive there from the Continent. Arthur Fosdyke was to appear at the same time, having lingered a day or two in town for the purpose of having his friend Sir Edward as the companion of his

journey. Mr. and Mrs. Dampierre had taken possession of the Rectory; and everybody was fully intent upon passing a gay and happy summer.

“Now, tell me, Anna,” said Charlotte, the morning after Arthur’s arrival, “and tell me true, what think you of my brother? Is he like what you expected?—like what I described him?”

“What unanswerable questions you ask, Lotte,” said her cousin, laughing. “How can I have formed any opinion of him yet, except as to his being tall or short, dark or fair? You seem, too, to suppose that my expectation concerning him must of necessity have been built on your descriptions; but I beg you to understand, cousin mine, that I have not been an inmate of Fosdyke Lodge for rather more than three weeks without discovering that if one desires to arrive at the simple truth one must not absolutely pin one’s faith on the representations of Charlotte Fosdyke.”

“What mean you, most sober Anna? Am I to take that tirade to myself generally, or do you intend basely to assert or insinuate that I have misled you about my brother? You say you can only judge of

his appearance as yet; so tell me, did I exaggerate when I said he was handsome?"

"Oh, no; I believe he is very good-looking, though I felt last night, and this morning too, so much in the way after his long absence from you all, that I scarcely ventured to look at him; but I mean, that generally you rattle away so wildly, and are so imaginative, that I always fancy you do not mean anybody to believe more than half you say; and of what you do mean to be received as truth, and of what you really think truth yourself, one ought to cut off half again."

"And so everything I say is divided by four, before it finds entrance into your mind! That's so like Arthur, only he says he divides by ten. You cannot think, Anna, how gravely he talks about it; and he really thinks it so wrong, that I do rather try to be sober when he is with us, but I believe it is not my nature; and in spite of all his arguments I don't see that there is much harm in it. Do you?"

"Dearest Charlotte," replied Anna, "I feel I have no right to lecture you, or I should have already told you that it seems to me that truth is too high and holy a thing to be set aside for the sake of wit and drol-

lery, independently of the evident danger there is in accustoming ourselves to disregard truth in trifling matters that we come to setting it aside in points of more consequence."

"All this is too wide a subject to be canvassed just now," said Charlotte, a little pettishly, and forgetting that she had asked for Anna's opinion; "besides we may be sure that it will not be long, let me be as careful as I will, before some little rhodomontade of mine will draw down upon me an admonition from my brother, and then one battle will do for you both; for you must know I always do battle in defence of my little misdemeanours when attacked by Arthur, though I must confess he is so much more ready at his weapons than I am, that, if not quite conquered, I generally feel I come off second best."

"Perhaps that is in some measure attributable to the goodness of his cause, Charlotte."

"Perhaps it is," replied she, with something like a sigh as she started from the seat and placed herself at the piano. "Come and sing that song Lady Belcomb sent me yesterday; will you, Anna?"

They had not finished their song before the door was heard gently to open. Anna turned her head sufficiently to perceive that the intruder was Arthur. Her colour slightly rose, but she continued her song. When ended, she resumed her place on the sofa.

“ You cannot guess the treat that is to me,” said Arthur; “ I have not heard a note of music, Charlotte, out of a church since I last heard you sing. You have improved very much since then. Did you have any lessons while you were with Lady Belcomb?”

“ No, I was too idle; and to tell you the truth, I am afraid I sing no whit better than I did last year, but you have never heard me sing with Anna before. But, Arthur,” added she, “ if you ever paid a compliment by way of propitiating good will, I should suspect you now of being guilty of praising my singing in hopes of making me forgive your unauthorized intrusion into our sanc-tum. In that case, Anna must come in for her share.”

“ To make my compliments of any value to Miss Marsden,” said he, “ I had better reserve them till their sincerity will not be

suspected ; but, in truth, Lotte, I did not know my entrance here needed an apology. You used to give me full leave and licence to be here as much as I liked."

" Yes, but that was in the days of my sole dominion. Anna is joint proprietor now, and her permission must be obtained as well as mine. What say you, Anna? Shall we accord him the desired favour?"

" My reign here has been so short," replied she, " that I scarcely feel justified in exercising the right of sovereignty ; but, as I believe, all prudent monarchs begin by sanctioning the acts of their immediate predecessors, I had better do so too."

" Thanks, fair ladies both !" cried Arthur. " Excluded from this room, Lotte, I should scarcely have felt myself at home. You must not make it too attractive though, for I cannot spend so much of my time here as in days gone by."

" And why not, Arthur ?" asked Charlotte ; " you have no more reading for your degree, which was your constant excuse last year when anybody wanted you to do anything. I thought this time you would come back to us free as air, with nothing to do but ride, walk, read, and sing with Anna and me."

“ Nay, Charlotte,” said he, gravely; “ can you have forgotten that I have now to prepare for something more important—more solemn than taking my degree?”

“ Your ordination? Oh, I hoped, and so does papa, that you would defer that for a few months. There can be no hurry about it, and you would have more time to make up your mind.”

“ I am sorry my father entertains such an idea, particularly as he knows that I have long been too completely resolved to take orders, for any earthly consideration to move me. I had thought my father was quite reconciled to it.”

“ Perhaps he does not intend to say anything more to you against it; and if so, as usual, I have done mischief by talking when I ought to have held my tongue.”

“ No, dear Lotte,” replied her brother, “ don’t vex yourself about that; it only shows that I have more reason to be grateful to my father for yielding to my wishes, than if my arguments had convinced him.”

The trio remained together the greater part of the morning, chatting now of gay bygone days which still lived freshly in the recollection both of the brother and sister,

and then of plans and projects for the coming season, in which Anna was to bear a part; the conversation being occasionally interrupted by a song from Charlotte, asked for by her brother, when some reminiscence of the past recalled it to his memory. The hours flew by so rapidly, that they were all surprised when a servant appeared to tell them that luncheon and Sir Edward Belcomb were in the dining-room.

“Now, Anna,” said Charlotte, “put on your brightest smiles and most fascinating air,—your newly-won popularity, ‘which should be worn now in its newest gloss,’ will speedily vanish, if your testimonials are not countersigned by Sir Edward. He is our great man, you know, the desired of all hearts, even if he is not the admired of all eyes.”

“Nay,” said Arthur, “I should reverse your dictum, and say he must surely be the admired of all eyes, even if not the desired of all hearts, for it is impossible to deny that he is a handsome young fellow; and what is more, Miss Marsden, though he is the great man of the neighbourhood as far as property goes, he is as free from hauteur and pretension of all kind as if he were the sixth son

of a country curate. Charlotte has not seen him for nearly two years; but he used in our juvenile days to be her special ally and play-fellow, and is now the most intimate friend I have. He requires no puffing, or I could tell you many, many anecdotes that would make you value him at once; in a quiet way Belcomb can do his own honours exceedingly well."

"Then I suppose his eighteen months on the Continent have left him as agreeable as he was before his travels began: he certainly was delightful as a boy."

"You knew him as something more than a boy, Lotte," returned her brother. "Belcomb was of age before he left England; but let us join them in the dining-room, instead of discussing his merits up here."

Sir Edward and Charlotte met with the cordial greeting of old friends, and the conversation which ensued at the luncheon-table turning chiefly upon the events of past times, in which all the young people but Anna had borne an active part, she had leisure to listen to and compare the two young men with whom she was likely, from the intimacy subsisting between the families, to become more than ordinarily well ac-

quainted. They were both undeniably well-looking, intelligent, agreeable men. Sir Edward was tall, being full six feet, with the grace of manner and happy address of a man used to good society; joined to this he had the more precious and rare charms of a frank and gentle expression of countenance, together with a natural unsophisticated tone of conversation which could not fail to attract all who knew him.

Arthur was nearly three inches shorter, somewhat slighter in figure, with darker hair and eyes. Personally there was small resemblance between the friends, and as little perhaps in all else that was completely external. If Arthur had not the acquired polish of his friend, he had an originality of manner that to some was more interesting. There was an earnest sincerity in his rich deep voice which impressed, and in some measure won, those who listened to him, even when most disposed to differ from him. Sir Edward never called forth an opponent; Arthur often conquered one, and gained an adherent.

Something of all this Anna perceived before the friends left the dining-room together; but she had been too much occupied

in speculating upon both, to come to any conclusion as to which she should probably like the best.

CHAPTER VI.

“PRAYERS every morning in the church at eight o’clock,” exclaimed Mrs. Fosdyke in a tone of something like horror, as she approached the luncheon-table on her return from church the following Sunday, “and service on all the Church Festivals, as he called them! Well! that’s declaring himself openly enough, I hope, and will put an end to all speculation about him: nobody now will ask what sort of opinions Mr. Dampierre holds. Poor Chollerton!” added she with a sigh. “It will be a sad change for Chollerton, Mr. Fosdyke!”

“I suspect,” answered he, “that this style of thing will not make as much difference to Chollerton as you fear or Mr. Dampierre hopes. He will be the topic of conversation at the next half-dozen dinner parties at which he is not present; he will find his church empty and cold at his morning pray-

ers and Saint day's services, and then they will be discontinued with less fuss even than they are begun."

"Nay, sir," observed Arthur, "I can scarcely think a man, expressing himself as Mr. Dampierre did this morning upon the duty of offering daily prayer and of commemorating the festivals of the Church according to Her appointment, would easily be brought to neglect the practice in his own parish."

"But, Arthur," said Charlotte, "if papa is right, as you cannot doubt, in saying that Mr. Dampierre will find himself alone in the church morning after morning, he must see there is no use in going on with it."

"Supposing his efforts should be so ill seconded, Lotte," returned her brother, "I still do not think Mr. Dampierre will give it up. If it be his duty as a parish priest to read the service of the Church, it cannot cease to be so because his people neglect the duty of joining their prayers to his. But I do not believe our Rector will be placed in so painful a solitude as my father and you contemplate. In every parish where the daily service has been restored of late, some persons have been found who have eagerly

and thankfully accepted the opportunity offered to them of publicly joining in the prayers of the Church; and doubtless so zealous a priest as Mr. Dampierre appears to be, will not content himself with merely enabling his parishioners to offer with one accord their daily prayers and praises to the Almighty, he will endeavour to make them feel the doing so to be no less a privilege than a duty ; and with God's assistance he will doubtless succeed with some."

"I supposed your mother's and my observation would draw you forth as a champion for this new sect," said his father. "I never say much to you about it, as you are young and enthusiastic, and it will all rub off with a little practical acquaintance with the world; but I confess I look upon the sort of thing very differently when I find it in a man of Mr. Dampierre's age and position. Speculative imaginings do little harm to a young man of two and twenty; but when acted upon by a forty years' old rector of a parish like Chollerton, it becomes something worse than contemptible."

"The little that I have seen of Mr. Dampierre," observed Mrs. Fosdyke, "impressed me with the idea of his being a very sen-

sible, rational, well-bred man, not likely to be betrayed into any eccentric absurdities."

"Exactly so, my dear," replied her husband; "and his sermon this morning astonished me proportionably. If, however, he is the rational man he appears to be, he will soon perceive that this style of thing does not take at Chollerton, and then he will drop it. Or if he persist in leaving his bed while it's half light to read a set of prayers in church to his wife and the clerk, instead of doing it in his own dining-room, like the rest of his profession, it will do us no harm."

Mr. Fosdyke then decidedly turned the conversation into its more ordinary channel, and the party soon dispersed.

The breakfast hour at Fosdyke Lodge was a liberal nine, and Anna the next morning resolved to go to church, without fearing that her doing so would be discovered. As she knew that the distance to the church was too short to occasion any risk of this, she was not called upon to determine in what manner she would have acted had the case been different. We must not presume, therefore, to look more closely into her heart than she did herself; but we may safely affirm that she rejoiced much at finding

herself able to resume an old habit which had been a source of great comfort to her at a time when she much needed some solace.

She raised her eyes to the clock in the tower as she entered the door of the church, and perceived she was only just in time to reach her seat in the family pew before the service would begin. With a self-condemning feeling at having so nearly been too late, she hastened up the nave, and reached the pew without raising her eyes to see if Mr. Fosdyke was right in supposing there would be no congregation; nor was it till she had risen from her knees and opened her prayer-book, that she discovered that she was not the only occupant of the cushioned, curtained pew-fold. Arthur Foskyke was there before her. Exclusive of Mr. Dampierre's family, there were about a dozen persons, all of the poorer classes, except one old half-pay officer of the navy.

In little more than half an hour Arthur and Anna found themselves silently walking side by side through the churchyard. It was their first tête à tête; and Anna, though not usually shy, felt, she scarcely knew why, rather unwilling to break the

silence. The effort was not needed. Her companion waited till they had left the consecrated ground, and then said,

“Good morning, Miss Marsden. I had not expected to have met you so early this morning. You took no part in our little discussion at the luncheon-table yesterday which could lead me to hope that your opinion on the subject coincided with mine.”

“I am sure, Mr. Fosdyke,” replied she, “I said nothing which could induce you to believe that I differed from you. In fact, I spoke not a word. Surely I should have been to blame to have entered the lists uncalled for against your father and mother, even in support of the best and highest of causes. Do not you think so?” added she, after vainly waiting a moment for a reply.

“I don’t quite know,” answered he. “It is a question I am not prepared to answer absolutely. You may have been right yesterday; and you are probably a better judge than I am on the subject. I think, however, we should all consider the many things which may tempt us to be silent when it is a duty to speak, and ascertain to our own satisfaction that we are really not actuated by an unworthy motive. You understand,” added

he hastily, "that now I am speaking generally, and not in particular reference to your silence yesterday, which may have been judicious, nay right. I do not pronounce on it; and you will forgive me if, on the other hand, I confess that my present observations are intended in some measure to apply to you. The single circumstance of meeting you in church this morning convinces me that on some points you think differently from my dear father and mother and from Charlotte. How great, then, must be your inducement, now you are a member of our family, dear Miss Marsden, to be silent where you must be in so great a minority. Will not that, if yielded to, lead to a concealment of principles which it is a primary duty to confess and uphold? Will not such a concealment of principle tend to a laxity of practice? But you think me unwarranted in thus addressing you,—impertinent, perhaps."

"Oh, no," replied Anna gently; "I am not so rich in friends as to afford to call anything kindly meant, impertinent; indeed, none of us, I believe, can number many willing to speak disagreeable truths to us. That you should so venture to speak to me

I am aware is from your zeal for the truth. Do not think me unworthy of your advice—your admonitions in future—if I still feel that my conduct yesterday, my general conduct in that respect, admits of a defence opposed to your arguments."

"Then I shall believe till you tell me to the contrary," returned her companion, "that you will allow me to speak as candidly to you as I do to my sister. I wish you had now time to tell me how you differ from me; but I must not let you go without saying, it was not zeal for the truth alone which induced me to speak. I feared a habit of withholding your opinions would be injurious to yourself, and I hoped an expression of them would be beneficial to my sister."

They reached the hall door as he uttered these words; she entered the house, and he passed towards the garden, without either speaking again.

Anna had left her room, unconsciously rejoicing in being able to do what she thought right without any risk of incurring censure or exciting ridicule. She returned to it, doubtful whether she ought not voluntarily to expose herself to both. She had not much time to spare for thought after

laying aside her bonnet, and preparing to appear in the breakfast-room; and this she endeavoured to employ in recalling to her mind all she would have said to convince Arthur she was right, if their walk had been longer; but instead of so doing she perversely repeated to herself the arguments he had brought forward to prove she was wrong; and before she had discovered her mistake the breakfast bell disturbed her cogitations, and summoned her down stairs. She met Arthur as she crossed the hall, and entering the room together it was not observed that their usual morning greeting was omitted.

“There were nearly twenty persons in the church this morning,” said Arthur, addressing his father as he seated himself at the table; “and considering that the people have had only a few hours to reflect on Mr. Dampierre’s appeal to them on the subject of daily prayer, that was as many perhaps as could be anticipated.”

“Ah, indeed!” replied Mr. Fosdyke, “I should not have thought you would have mustered so strong. And who were your fellow devotees?”

Arthur’s eye rested for an almost imperceptible moment upon Anna, as he answered,

“I fancy the whole of Mr. Dampierre’s family and household were there; but the congregation chiefly consisted of the poorer classes.”

Anna, meanwhile, had been removing the shell from her egg with more than ordinary care and diligence; but she felt, nevertheless, that he had looked at her, and her ear caught something that sounded like constraint in his tone, some slight hesitation in his manner. This caused her colour to rise at a moment when she was most desirous of appearing unconcerned. She felt he thought she ought to confess that she too had been there; she half wished he would say it for her: she looked up, intending to say, “I think I saw Captain Allen there,” but the expression, almost stern, of Arthur’s countenance struck her as so unlike his usual mildness, that she paused for a moment. Charlotte made some lively remark which turned the current of the conversation, and the opportunity was gone.

No further allusion to the subject was made in the course of the day, and Anna found herself on the following morning again walking through the churchyard with Arthur by her side, with her mind still undecided

upon the propriety of avowing what she meant to make her daily practice, or of letting it pass in silence till it discovered itself. She distinctly assured herself that neither by word or deed would she attempt to conceal it. She and her companion exchanged their morning salutation, and then proceeded in silence, which to-day it was Anna's turn to break.

"You condemn me, Mr. Fosdyke," said she, turning to him with something of a desperate resolution to speak on a subject that was painful, "you condemn me for not mentioning yesterday that I had made one of Mr. Dampierre's morning congregation?"

"I have no right to condemn you, Miss Marsden," returned he, "without knowing the motives that actuated you. Your silence may have been produced by a feeling of deference, right in itself, though in my opinion unnecessary, nay, wrong in the present instance; or," added he, with some slight hesitation, "or it may have been produced by cowardice."

"Thank you," replied she, half smiling, "for giving me the benefit of the doubt *now*; at the moment you felt sure it was unmitigated cowardice—did you not?"

“Yes, I did,” returned he, frankly; “but upon reconsidering the subject, it occurred to me that it might not be so.”

“Shall I confess, nevertheless, that your first interpretation was the right one? I believe the truth is, I was afraid to say where I had been. You think me wholly inexcusable?” added she, as he walked on without making any reply.

“Of course I think you wholly inexcusable if you encourage or give way to such a weakness; but I hope you will, on the contrary, struggle against it. Will not you?” continued he, earnestly, “and in this very instance overcome it?”

“I will tell Charlotte,” replied Anna. “I shall not so much mind speaking to her about it.”

“No, no!” cried her uncompromising friend, “that will be encouraging a weakness that I am sure you now feel to be wrong. Tell them simply at breakfast that you went yesterday and to-day to church; that you mean to go regularly. Put it how you will. If you find it more difficult this morning than you would have done yesterday, take that added difficulty as a penance for having been silent when you ought to

have summoned courage to speak. Do not be angry with me for speaking so plainly to you: you have given me leave, you know, to talk to you as I would to my sister, and she will tell you I always scold her when I think she is wrong."

"Indeed I am not angry," replied Anna, "though you do give advice so very distasteful to me. I believe you are right; but you as a man cannot guess perhaps how painful it is to a woman to come forward in any way and express opinions in opposition to people to whom she ought to submit. Your father, for instance, stands now in the light of a parent to me, and I feel that I owe him the deference due to one."

"You are quite right in so feeling; and therefore if my father were to forbid you to attend the daily service in the church, I would have you submit without a word; but if such a practice is only likely to meet with a little ridicule, you are bound, in my opinion, to encounter that rather than shrink from an avowal that you believe such and such things to be your duty. Remember, too, that as long as you attempt simply to obey the commands of the Church, you cannot feel that anything of presumption

attaches to you, even if others find that the strictness of your conduct practically condemns the laxity of theirs. I conceive that obedient members of the Church have in this respect a great advantage over those who, striving to live a more holy life than those around them, yet carve out their own mode of doing so, which is of necessity too apt to engender the feeling which says, 'I am holier than thou.'

This observation brought them to the door of the house, and terminated their conversation.

The family party had not been long seated at the breakfast table when Anna said, with something of a heightened colour on her cheek,

"Our numbers at church were increased this morning, Charlotte, by your friend Miss Riley."

"Have you been to church this morning, Anna?" asked Charlotte, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes," answered Anna.

"And yesterday? Did you go yesterday?"

Another "Yes," was the answer.

"How odd," returned Charlotte. "Why

did you not tell me you were going?—perhaps I might have gone with you."

"I did not think that likely, Lotte, from what you said when the subject was mentioned on Sunday, and I wished to resume an old habit without making a fuss about it."

"Is going to church every morning an old habit of yours, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Fosdyke, with a look of astonishment.

"For the last year or two," returned Anna, "we always had morning prayers at Langley, and my mother never objected to my going."

Mr. Fosdyke looked as if he had intended to have joined the conversation, but upon this mention of her mother he turned abruptly to Arthur, and asked him to accompany him in a ride he was contemplating. This was not the first time that Charlotte fancied she had remarked in her father a disinclination to talk about Mrs. Marsden, and it now recalled to her remembrance that Mrs. Travers had said there was a history connected with her which she would one day tell her.

"And why not to-day?" said she to herself, as the thought passed her mind. "Mother mine," continued she, aloud, "if it suit with your good pleasure, I will bestow my-

self this morning upon Mrs. Travers. I have not spent a long morning with her for an age; not since you came here, Anna; and if she scold me, I will tell her it's your fault, and then she will detest you, which is just what I wish. I have so long been first favourite with my dear old godmother, that I cannot spare any of her love to other people."

"First favourite I suppose you must remain," returned her cousin, "but why must she detest me? Will you not let me hold a place in her good graces at a respectful distance? There is so much that charms me in her; such surprising freshness of feeling for a person of her age; so much raciness of expression and originality of thought."

"Mrs. Travers," said Mr. Fosdyke, "is one who is as much respected by the old and sober as she is beloved by the young and giddy. I feel sure she will like and value you, Anna, in spite of Lotte's promised endeavours to set her against you."

"To say the truth," rejoined Charlotte, "I dare say she will, but it will be strange, too. How can a person very much like Anna and very much like me? It seems to me that there never were two girls more

unlike, and yet we suit each other marvelously well at times. Ah, Anna, I see you shaking your head in a manner that seems to imply that we have our differences too; but, as that cannot be helped, suppose you come up stairs with me now. I feel inclined to have a battle with you before going to Mrs. Travers;" and so saying she passed her arm through her cousin's, and they left the breakfast room together.

"I want to have a talk with you about this newly-discovered eccentricity of yours, Anna," pursued Charlotte, as they crossed the hall and ascended the stairs; "but, upon second thoughts, it will be better to put it off till after my visit, and then if our discussion should *tirer en longueur*, we shall have nothing to interrupt us."

"As you will, Lotte, but why do you call it an eccentricity in me? Your brother goes to church also; why do you not attack him about it?"

"I have ceased to wonder," returned Charlotte, "at any new-fangled notion or practice of his connected with religion, and he contrives always to have so much to say in support of his view of the subject, that I often find myself silenced, if not convinced;

but it is something so new to come across such odd notions in a friend of my own sex and age that I long to have a chat with you about it."

"My dear Lotte," replied her cousin, "how your imagination gallops! What odd ideas have you discovered in me? All I have said is, that I have been in the habit of attending the morning service."

"Oh I know very well all that goes along with that sort of thing generally; but I shall not have time to cross-examine you this morning on this subject, so I shall leave you now for an hour or two, which you can spend in considering what you can say in your defence, and why you should not be brought in guilty of being a——"

"Don't call people names, Lotte," said Arthur, who had joined them unperceived.

"I did not know you were here, Arthur," said his sister, slightly blushing. "Now don't look grave, and I will try and not do so again; but it is very difficult, you must allow, always to avoid words one hears every body using, and difficult, too, to find substitutes that answer the same purpose. May I talk of Evangelicals and Saints?"

"Certainly not as terms of reproach. I

wish people did talk, or at least think a little more of the saints that have gone before them. Grammatically speaking, I do not think you can correctly say an Evangelical."

"Oh, Arthur!" cried Charlotte, laughing, "you know I don't care about grammatically speaking. I want you to tell me if you think it is as wrong to call Low Church people such names as High Church people?"

"In itself," he replied, "it is of course equally objectionable; but it may be more or less reprehensible, according to the nature of the term applied. To call a person by way of reproach an Evangelical or Saint is wrong as well as absurd. If such an one is really a saint, or a true follower of the holy Evangelists, so much the better—you need not ridicule, but should rather imitate him. And if you say it in jest, it must surely be sinful lightly to speak of those of whom our Church teaches us to think reverently. The terms that are now so frequently applied to those you call High Church people are objectionable in another point of view—they are uncharitable. Why should you accuse those who profess to be followers of Christ, and are members of His Church, of the sin

of the Corinthians, who said, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos.'

"That's very true," resumed his sister, "I never thought of it in that light, and I believe all you say on the subject is just, Arthur; but you must admit that it is difficult to think what every body does is wrong, or to avoid doing it one's self."

"I will tell you what is very difficult, dear Charlotte," replied her brother. "To make what the Bible and the Church teach, and *what every body does*, a joint standard of what is right—so difficult as to be impossible. You must take your choice between them—hold by the one, and overthrow and cast from you the other."

Charlotte only answered by a sigh. She knew not how to oppose him, and was very unwilling to admit the truth of his observation. She felt she was in the difficulty he had mentioned, and was not prepared to take either road pointed out by him. So she followed a plan of her own, one she had often adopted in a similar emergency. She ceased to think about it, and began to talk of something else.

CHAPTER VII.

THE distance between Fosdyke Lodge and the Lawn was soon traversed by Charlotte in her little pony carriage, and before noon she found herself established in full talk with her partial old godmother.

“Now, dearest Mrs. Travers,” said she, “I hope you will this morning fulfil your promise of telling me the tale of which Mrs. Marsden was the heroine. You know you said you would not do so till I had seen and judged of Anna. My estimate of her cannot now be influenced by anything I hear of her mother, but your history may serve to enlighten me on one or two points, where I feel I am in the dark.”

“Perhaps, my love,” returned Mrs. Travers, “it would have been wiser of me to have said nothing about it, and yet mysteries are always objectionable to my mind—and now at least I am sure of no peace till you know all I have to tell. But you must not expect a tale of thrilling interest as it will come from my lips, as you are aware I have not a tender heart where love matters are

the theme; and yet the remembrance of those bygone days still sadden me when I think of them.

“I was several years older than those of whom I am going to tell you, in fact already married, when Anna Fludyer was first introduced into our neighbourhood. She was left an orphan when quite a child, and was brought up in the house of your grandfather, to whom she was related. Mr. Fosdyke had two sons, both rather older than Anna. Your father was the eldest, and his brother Edward but a year his junior. These two had received a private education, being brought up in their father’s house. They had reached manhood ere they had been parted for a day, and a more than ordinary affection united them.”

“How strange,” said Charlotte, interrupting the narration, “that all this should be new to me. I never heard my father mention a brother.”

“Not strange at all, my Charlotte, as you will find as I advance with my tale; but I must endeavour to tell it as shortly as I can, or it will occupy us till night-fall.”

“Oh, never mind if it does!” exclaimed Charlotte eagerly. “Think how interesting every word is to me.”

“Their chief, almost their sole companion,” resumed the old lady, “was Anna Fludyer; for at the time of which I am speaking, the neighbourhood here was much more scanty than it is now. You think Miss Marsden beautiful, Lotte, and so she must be except in the eyes of those who remember her mother from seventeen to twenty-one. There is much likeness between them, too—great similarity of feature, but much more difference of expression. With her

“Every feature had the power
To aid the expression of the hour.”

Can you picture to yourself your young friend’s countenance divested of that too constant and almost unnatural calmness, and lit up with an ever-varying expression? At one moment gay and joyous as yourself, my Lotte, and the next giving way to some feeling of generous indignation, which again might be followed by a look of scorn, from which nothing, whether human or divine, was altogether safe. The first Anna would have made the more interesting, the more exciting companion; but if a man I would rather trust for my chance of happiness to the second. If, therefore,

matters should turn out as I suspect they may, your brother may be a happier man than his father was."

"Indeed I think you are mistaken in what you fancy about Arthur, Mrs. Travers—he likes and admires Anna, as every body must that sees much of her, but he seems very little occupied with her, if you understand what I mean. But pray go on. I suppose my father fell in love with his fascinating cousin. Yet how different you describe her to have been from my own dear gentle mother."

"No two beings," continued Mrs. Travers, "could be more unlike; but you will cease to marvel at that when you have heard the sequel. These three were, as I tell you, brought up together in the most perfect intimacy almost from childhood, and the old people appeared to be as blind to what was going on immediately before their eyes as fathers and mothers so frequently are; but I was then of an age to be interested in such matters, and circumstances needless to mention made me well acquainted with many of the sentiments that animated the young trio. By degrees it was evident to me, that the ordinary feeling of cousinly affection had

given way, both in your father and in his brother, to one of a much warmer nature. By still slower degrees, perhaps, each became aware of the change in his own heart, but unhappily neither saw into the heart of his brother, until after each had been deeply convinced that his only chance of earthly happiness lay in calling Anna Fludyer his wife.

“I hope I may be judging her harshly, but even after this lapse of years, when angry feelings have long since subsided on all sides, and the grave has closed over two of the actors of the scenes—of the two most sinning and most suffering of the trio—even now I cannot divest myself of the conviction that Anna perceived, gloried in, and encouraged, the earnest attachment of both her cousins. Doubtless she did not foresee, the deep suffering her wanton coquetry was to cause; for, heartless and reckless herself, she could not comprehend the depth of affection she had called forth, nor, while she was carried away by the enjoyment of the moment, could she calmly consider the possible consequence of her conduct. But I will not linger over this part of my tale. The brothers mutually discovered each other’s secret,

and mutually accused each other of treachery. After a scene of much reproach and recrimination, in which their former attachment seemed forgotten, or only remembered to aggravate to each the offence of the other, they parted, resolved at once openly to declare their love to Anna, and receive from her lips their final doom. Each thought himself secure of her heart. She rejected your father, and accepted his brother. Something of real feeling, some touch of true-heartedness, must have actuated her, when she refused to wed the heir of Fosdyke Lodge, that she might become the wife of your uncle, who, with a younger brother's portion, was destined to carve out his own fortune in the world. I always infinitely preferred your father, but I could understand Edward's greater attraction in the eyes of Anna Fludyer. There was in him a bright, nay, a fiery vivacity, if I may say so, a keenness of intellect, and a vehemence of character, that accorded with her own restless disposition; joined to this, he had, in common with all of his race whom I have ever known, a generous-hearted confidence, which she could admire, if she could not imitate. Alas, that two such noble hearts

should be caught and trampled on by one so unworthy as Anna Fludyer!"

"Stay one moment, dear Mrs. Travers!" exclaimed Charlotte: "I do not like interrupting you, but I must ask if you think Anna, our Anna, knows anything of this history?"

"Most probably not. I do not know from whom she could hear it but from her mother; and it is not likely she would tell it to her, unless she coloured it with rather different tints from what I do in my relation to you; but to proceed. The rejected lover immediately left England with the avowed intention of spending some years in travelling abroad. The marriage of Anna and Edward was settled. Your grandfather, who loved her as a daughter, could not see anything reprehensible in her conduct, and the entire blame of the unseemly breach between the brothers was thrown upon your father; not that Edward would have harboured an unjust thought of any one after the first whirlwind of passion had passed away, but he, as well as her guardian, was completely enthralled by Anna, and received as facts not to be disputed or inquired into whatever she asserted or insinuated.

“ The marriage was arranged to take place immediately, but some little delay occurred in drawing up the settlement, as Miss Fludyer had considerable property. During this interval some disturbance in the neighbouring towns being apprehended, a troop of horse was quartered at a distance of about fourteen miles from us. The officers made a most unusual and inspiriting addition to our dinners and dances; and from being a remarkably quiet set of people, we became for that summer very gay and dissipated. After they had been among us for a few weeks, acquaintance ripened in many instances into intimacies, and formal dinner parties gave place to sociable pic-nics and dances on the lawn. This was quite a new scene for Anna. Hitherto she had but learnt her loveliness from her own glass and from the effect it had produced upon her two young cousins; but now, introduced for the first time into general society, and among those who had not been accustomed to her beauty from having watched its growth from infancy to womanhood, she was herself surprised at the sensation she created. At first the general homage paid to her whom he considered as sacredly his own as if the vow

that was to bind them to each other had already been pronounced at the altar, flattered rather than distressed her lover. Then he waxed impatient at so frequently finding her engrossed by the attention of some gay and dashing dragoon, without a moment to spare for her affianced husband. While uncertain of her attachment before she had pledged herself to him, the slightest look, the merest change of intonation, might have roused within him a tempest of jealousy ; but now his confidence in the truth of her he loved precluded a thought of the kind, but still her conduct pained him, and he remonstrated with her. It was not seemly, she replied, that people situated as they were should be seen much together. Arguments such as this for a while pacified him, and she continued more heedlessly than before to endure and encourage attentions which could have no prosperous issue. Her lover again took fire, and again he remonstrated more strongly than before. Hers was not a temper calmly to take a rebuke, especially from one from whom she had been accustomed to receive the most constant admiration and devotion. She listened haughtily, and replied to him with the most cutting nonchalance. A scene

ensuing upon such an opening between persons equally excitable and warm could not pass without many severe observations being uttered on both sides. This took place on the morning that a *fête champêtre* was to be given by me. Edward Fosdyke would not accompany the party from the Lodge. That evening was the last time Anna Fludyer was seen at Chollerton. She eloped from this house with Captain Marsden. Never shall I forget the dismay, the anguish that poor old Mr. Fosdyke appeared to feel as by degrees, after all search had been made for his missing ward, and one by one, every hope that his imagination could conjure up faded away, and the truth was forced upon his mind that she was indeed gone, and accompanied by one whom we all then acknowledged we had already had reason to believe to be a most worthless man. My tale now draws towards its close, Lotte; but though I have told you of discord being created between two brothers, from infancy more than ordinarily attached to each other, and a breach between them made which was never to be repaired on earth; though I have told you of one brother driven from his home and his country a prey to disappointed love, and

followed most unjustly by the blame of all those whose esteem he most valued; and of the other betrayed and deserted on the eve of his marriage by her on whose affection his every hope of happiness depended; though I have told you of the father of these victims of heartless coquetry abandoned in his old age by one whom he had loved and cherished as a daughter, yet, Lotte, the saddest incident has yet to be related. Edward parted from Miss Fludyer after the interview I have described took place between them, in a highly irritated state: he would not trust himself to accompany her to my *fête*, but mounting his horse, rode half across the county. The more miles he placed between himself and his offending *fiancée*, the more his indignation cooled and his love returned. He blamed himself and his own violence of temper for all that had occurred between them; and turned his horse's head homewards, that he might receive and make his peace with her on her return from the *fête*.

“ It was in this mood that he had to learn the tidings of her elopement. I can tell you nothing of the scene which took place that night between him and your grandfather. The fatal consequences of it were

too soon known to us all. After he parted from his father, he was seen by no one again alive.

“ His body was discovered a few days afterwards some miles lower down the coast, where it had apparently been thrown and left by the receding tide. A few incoherent lines addressed to his father were found placed under a stone near the entrance-gate, taking an eternal farewell of his family, as this place, and all those belonging to it, were too indelibly connected with the past in his mind for him to remain here. Some people conceived these words were written with the intention of immediately destroying himself; others understood from them a design of for ever quitting a country which henceforth would be distasteful to him, and that his premature death was the effect of accident. This latter belief was always held by all your family; and no one, of course, in their presence ever alluded to the event in any other light; but the dreadful doubt, which could not but rest upon the minds of those to whom all the circumstances were well known, threw a deeper shade of gloom over the sad tragedy, and added, perhaps unjustly, to the odium with

which the name of Anna Fludyer was remembered among us. Your father immediately returned to England, and the change that was so evident in him did not tend to make us judge her more leniently. Pale and haggard in person, shaken in health and subdued in spirits, the sight of the living son no less than the recollection of him who was no more, constantly recalled her to our minds as the heartless author of all this misery. Her name was never mentioned at the Lodge; and she, who had so many years been the star and centre of the family, was as one long dead, and whose memory had passed away. Years flew by, and Mr. Fosdyke grew anxious that his only child should marry and perpetuate his race. Your father could never love again as he had once loved Anna, but by degrees he became sincerely attached to your mother. Their affection, founded on mutual esteem and confidence, has formed the happiness of their existence; and those old friends of your father, who, like myself, witnessed and mourned over the troubled morning of his life, cannot but love and value her who has given so different a colouring to the meridian of it."

“Your history is, indeed, a sad one,” said Charlotte, after a few moments’ silence on the conclusion of the narrative, to which she had listened with almost breathless interest; “and Anna, our simple, truthful Anna, is that dreadful woman’s child! But, Mrs. Travers,” continued she, as the idea seemed first to cross her mind, “is it not strange that Mrs. Marsden should have confided her daughter to the care of one whom she had so greatly injured?”

“The grave closing over the offender, Charlotte,” replied her friend, “often wipes out all memory even of injuries deep as those sustained by your father at the hands of his cousin; but certainly Mrs. Marsden’s venturing from her death-bed to ask him to watch over her daughter shows that years of complete estrangement had not taught her to forget the generous kindness of his heart. He could not, I am sure, have prevailed on himself to have seen her living, but she judged rightly in thinking that her dying request would be sacred to him. Whatever may be the cost to his own feelings, to see a second Anna installed exactly in the place of the first, he will not shrink from acting a father’s part to her. Nevertheless, Lotte,

though he may watch over her interests as a faithful guardian, and learn perhaps to love her for her own sake, I cannot but think the recollection of past days would make the sight of any attachment between Arthur and her very bitter to him."

"Nay, that would surely be a prejudice unworthy of my dear father," said Charlotte. "Nobody can know Anna Marsden without feeling that she has not a particle of those faults which rendered her mother so detestable. She is truth itself, and incapable of anything approaching to coquetry."

"Very true, my dear, I dare say," returned Mrs. Travers. "She certainly seems a very amiable and engaging girl; but I hope, for all your sakes, your brother will not fall in love with her, and yet I do not well see how he can help it."

"Now I, on the contrary—forgive me for saying so—cannot help wishing that what you deprecate might take place, and so, of course, I regret that I see no signs of it. Arthur seems quite insensible, though I know he likes and admires her."

"I trust he may continue in that mind, Lotte; and now let us go to luncheon—there comes Wilson to announce it. I feel

quite tired with the tale I have told you, and I shall not speak another word till I have had a glass of wine."

"Answer me only one question," said Charlotte, "and I will not ask for another syllable. Mrs. Marsden—what became of her after she married? Was she ever happy?"

"I never saw her," replied Mrs. Travers, "after the evening on which she fled from Chollerton, but I used occasionally to hear of her during the first year of her married life. Captain Marsden married her partly for the fortune she was known to possess, and partly to gratify a miserable vanity by carrying off a girl universally admired and publicly known to be engaged to a man every way above himself. His discovery that his wife's property was so tied up that he had no power over it, apparently did not produce any increased affection for her. He first neglected, and then forsook her altogether. These trials, I was told, instead of softening the harsh points in her character, made her cold and bitter. The friends of her youth all turned from her; and after passing a few years of dissipation in London with her husband, she fixed herself in a remote part of Cheshire, and lived in great

retirement. She took this step in consequence, it was said, of her husband's leaving her and going abroad, where he died not many years afterwards. Your young friend I fancy had much to bear from her harsh and unbending temper."

"Poor Anna!" exclaimed Charlotte, the tears rising to her eyes; "how different her existence has been to mine. I always thought she looked as if she had never known what it was to be joyous. I trust in time that she will catch some of the happiness that seems naturally to belong to Chollerton. Though," added she with a sigh, "your story of this morning, dear Mrs. Travers, shows that Chollerton, too, has seen much misery."

"Indeed it has," returned her old friend, while a deep shade fell upon her features, which were generally lighted up with much animation. Charlotte remarked the saddened expression of her countenance, and wondered if speaking of long-past days and the sorrows of her friends had recalled to her mind how rapidly her own early vision of happiness had faded away.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUNCHEON at the Lawn was no sooner ended than Charlotte, again thanking Mrs. Travers for having redeemed her pledge of imparting to her all she knew of Mrs. Marsden's early history, bade her adieu, and prepared to drive home. She had not long passed the entrance gates before she saw Mary Riley approaching her on foot.

"My dearest Mary," cried she, hastily stopping her pony, "where are you going? If about nothing very important, do join me, I so much want a little talk with you."

"My object in walking so far this way," said Mary, "was that I might meet and be driven home by you. I saw you pass this morning, and guessed you would return soon after lunch."

"How kind of you," returned Charlotte, extending a hand to Miss Riley, as she stepped into the little carriage; "now I can have the rare treat of an uninterrupted chat with you. If you are not in haste, let us make a *detour* through Seaton Lane. It is a lovely morning."

"I shall enjoy an extended drive amaz-

ingly," replied Mary. "I left mama with a new book, which seems greatly to interest her; and I am most comfortably at your disposal for the next two hours. I have scarcely seen you, Lotte, since Miss Marsden's introduction among us. How do you like her? Forgive me for asking: it is scarcely a fair question."

"It would not be fair," returned her friend, "but that it is impossible not to like her and love her too. Short as is the time I have known her, Mary, I cannot help loving her. She is so unlike any one I ever met! So simple! so truthful! She has rather strange notions, though, on some subjects, I think: but she never volunteers them, though they come forward apparently without hesitation when occasion calls for them."

Charlotte paused, but was so much engrossed with the thought of her cousin, which her own observation had brought to her mind, that she did not hear what her friend said in reply.

"By the way, Mary," continued she abruptly, while she turned her pony's head towards the shady-looking lane which she had before mentioned, "by the way, Mary, I hear you were at church this morning.

Anna told me she saw you. How came you to patronize our Rector's starting eccentricity, as papa calls it?"

"The impulse of the moment carried me inside the church, Lotte. I was returning from my morning walk rather earlier than usual, and hearing the bell and seeing the church door open I felt inclined to enter. It was not curiosity exactly that actuated me, but as my eye rested for a moment on your cousin's countenance as she passed down the church, I was conscious that it was a feeling much less pure and holy than that which possessed her. I cannot quite understand her, Lotte; there is something in her beautiful face that repels at the same time that it attracts me. Seeing me by the side of Louisa, people think me sober and sedate; yet how impossible it appears to me to reach the calm tranquillity that seems so naturally to belong to Miss Marsden."

"Ah! Mary, you don't know Anna Marsden: with less attempt at concealment, with less of a desire about her to appear what she is not, than in any one I know, there is more to find out in her character, more to speculate upon, than in any body else. With all that calm exterior there is an under cur-

rent of enthusiasm, an easily kindled admiration for all that is high and noble, that would astonish those who only watch her demeanour in the every-day society one meets in the drawing-room. But much as I admire her, much as I love her, I can agree with her on scarcely any subject. She seems always to look at things from a different point, or through a different medium. Her view of religion I fancy colours every subject that presents itself to her mind."

"So it should," returned Mary; "and so it must, I suppose, to every mind that makes religion the first and chief object. It often surprises me," continued she, "to see how very little the religious opinions, even of those whom one calls religious people, influence their actions. Their religion and their worldly duties seem to run along parallel lines, never interfering or blending with each other. I am often astonished to find, Lotte, how much this is the case with myself. I cannot understand how one's mind can receive a religious conviction, and yet one's conduct remain entirely uninfluenced by it; yet I am sure it is the case with myself, and I think it is so with many others."

"All that is beyond me, Mary," returned

her friend. "I cannot take the trouble to investigate such abstruse questions. I suppose some people would say that religious dogmas assented to by the reason do not necessarily affect the heart, from which our actions more frequently spring. But without resolving your question, I think I know why I am not more religious: it is because I am so happy, so occupied, that I never seem to have time to stop and think. Perhaps living with Anna will make me more serious. I know I ought to be, and indeed I wish to be; but still I don't think I want to be quite what she is in that respect. Such very strict notions are so inconvenient!"

"Is Miss Marsden so very strict, Lotte? I have never noticed it in her."

"No, I dare say not. Indeed, I scarcely know myself yet how strict she is. I have almost instinctively shrunk from the subject with her, fearing I should say what would shock her; and she seems scrupulously to abstain from forcing forward her opinions. It only came out, in a measure accidentally, this morning, that she had been at church yesterday and to-day, and that she meant to make a practice of going."

The conversation continued in a varying

strain till they at length reached Fosdyke Lodge.

“The two hours you promised me,” said Charlotte, “have not yet expired, and I shall not let you escape till the given time has elapsed. Come up stairs. I dare say we shall find Anna in our boudoir.”

“Your hour or two, Lotte,” exclaimed Anna, as they entered, “have been somewhat leng. ones, I suspect. Miss Riley, is it you that have been instrumental in keeping Charlotte away so long? Arthur has been here to look for you twice.”

“I paid Mrs. Travers rather a long visit,” returned Charlotte, “and then I met Mary, and the day was so fine, and we found each other so mutually agreeable, that, instead of coming home by the road, we drove round by Seaton-lane. What have you been doing all the morning, Anna?”

“I remained quietly where you left me for some time,” replied Miss Marsden, “and then I was summoned to the drawing-room. Sir Edward called, and, as you were out and Arthur not forthcoming, I was compelled to emerge from my solitude. Mrs. Fosdyke wanted him to see the new heath that is just in bloom, and so I was sent to do the honours

of the conservatory to him. We then walked round the garden, looking for your father; but our search proved unsuccessful."

"And how did you like Sir Edward in a tête à tête, Anna?" asked Charlotte.

"Very much," replied she. "I thought him more agreeable this morning than I ever did before. There was so much more thought and earnestness in what he said than I had hitherto perceived in him. He was talking principally of your brother, and that seems a subject on which his eloquence readily kindles."

"You are quite right," returned Lotte; "Sir Edward and Arthur have been friends and close cronies from their earliest childhood, and the intercourse has been kept up at school and college. Sir Edward, though the elder, has always appeared to look up to Arthur, and to feel his superiority. I don't mean intellectually, for Sir Edward is very clever in his own way, and took a very good degree; but he respects in Arthur an undeviating consistency, and a straightforward adherence at all times to what he thinks right, which I have often heard him say he would give much to be able to imitate instead of only admiring. But I hear Arthur's

step; he is coming here. I feel half inclined, Anna, to attack you both on your joint expedition to church every morning.

“Mary, you will join my side, and we shall be two against two.”

“Nay, Charlotte,” returned Mary, “you must expect no aid from me. Like Sir Edward, I can admire what I do not imitate.”

“Pray, dearest Lotte,” said Anna, earnestly, “say nothing about it now.”

But she spoke in so low a tone, that the sound of the opening door prevented her petition from being heard.

“I am so glad you are come, Arthur,” said his sister, as soon as he had shaken hands with Miss Riley; “I want to understand as well as I can your views about this daily church-going. I did not know till this morning, that Anna agreed with you on this point.”

“Have I interrupted your conversation on this subject?” asked he, looking at Anna as he spoke.

“On the contrary,” replied Charlotte, “it was your joining us made us wish to discuss it. I have been at the Lawn all the morning, and have not had time as yet to talk to Anna about it.”

“The duty of attending the public service of our Church,” returned Arthur, “when-ever the opportunity is afforded to us, seems to be too obvious to require much to be said in support of it. To a dutiful member of it, the simple fact that the Church orders it must be a sufficient reason.”

“But practically, Mr. Fosdyke,” observed Mary, “we see that it is not a sufficient reason; for the great majority not only abstain from attending the service themselves, but—forgive me for what said to you sounds rather rude—ridicule those who do.”

“Will not that melancholy fact,” asked he, “to the truth of which I am unhappily compelled to assent, rather prove that practically the great majority of those who style themselves members of the Church are not dutiful Churchmen?”

“But, Arthur,” remarked his sister, “the great majority of the clergy do not give their parishioners an opportunity of attending any week-day service. Do you consider them undutiful Churchmen?”

“That is going to another part of the question,” answered he. “I am afraid those beneficed clergymen who, as you say, have *no* week-day prayers, cannot be considered

obedient sons of the Church; inasmuch as she orders, and they have bound themselves to perform, the services provided for Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saint-days. The daily morning and evening prayer, you are aware, is put upon a different footing. They are to offer it in the parish church, if not 'reasonably hindered.' Doubtless many very conscientious men placed in overgrown parishes, with more work before them in the way of privately attending to the spiritual wants of their people than they can possibly get through, consider themselves reasonably hindered by it from the duty of performing the public service."

"You, Mr. Fosdyke," observed Anna, "I suppose, from your manner of speaking, would agree with those who consider the offering up of daily public prayer the paramount duty."

"I am inclined to think I should," replied Arthur. "But I am always afraid to say what I should think it right to do in a situation in which I have never been placed."

"But consider, Arthur," said Charlotte, "the time it would take; think how much good might be done among the poor meanwhile."

"It would not take so much time as you imagine, Lotte," returned Arthur; "for all priests and deacons are bound to say the morning and evening prayer privately to themselves, if they are unable to do so openly in Church, and the difference in the time required would be very trifling."

"Clergymen of our Church compelled to repeat the daily prayers to themselves, Arthur!" cried Charlotte in apparent astonishment; "you quite surprise me. I know the Roman Catholic priests mumble over a lot of prayers to themselves, if they do not do it in church; but I never heard that English clergymen were obliged to do the same."

"They are not obliged to mumble them over, Lotte," said Anna, putting an open Prayer-book into her cousin's hand, and directing her eye to the paragraph containing the order that so greatly astonished her.

"Well, I am really surprised!" returned Charlotte.

"May I look at it too?" asked Mary, rising from her seat, and crossing the room to look at the passage. "How strange it is," continued she, addressing Lotte, "that we should never have noticed this before."

“It does seem strange, certainly,” returned Arthur, “that people professing to make the Prayer-book their manual of devotion should remain in ignorance of so much that is in it: but you are not singular in your ignorance. I believe there are great numbers who are no better acquainted with it, though I perceive it is not the case with Miss Marsden.”

“I had a very kind friend in the Rector of Langley,” replied Anna, “who called my attention to many points, which otherwise I should never have learned to think important. He taught me to consider the Prayer-book not as containing merely a set of prayers to be used in church on one day in the week, but as the volume which, next to the Bible, was to be the guide of my life, and which I should find in many instances a key to the right understanding of Scripture itself.”

“You have much reason to be thankful to him,” replied Arthur; “but we have turned away from considering the propriety of attending the Church services when they are offered to us, and no higher or more stringent duty interferes to prevent us. When you profess in the Creed to believe in the Holy Catholic Church, I presume, Charlotte, you

mean something. I may suppose you have some definite idea in your head?"

Charlotte did not seem very eager to reply; but as her brother paused, waiting for an answer, and no one else spoke, she was obliged to break silence.

"Yes, of course," said she at last, "I mean that I believe our Church to be the true Church, and that I belong to it."

"In professing," resumed her brother, "to believe the Church of which you have by Baptism been made a member, to be a branch of the true Church, as you say, do you not assert that you believe it to be divine in its origin, and now, as much as when it was first instituted, governed by Christ as its head, and influenced by his Holy Spirit?"

Again he waited for an answer, and again, after a pause, she replied,

"Yes, I suppose so."

"If you admit that," continued he, "how can you conceive yourself authorised to obey or disregard the injunctions of the Church according to your own appreciation of the wisdom of Her decrees? If you, indeed, believe the Church, as She exhibits Herself among us, to be what She claims to be, what course can be right for you to follow but one

of unhesitating and dutiful obedience? I need not now bring forward any of the various proofs that I could adduce in favour of Her claim to be considered divine in Her origin, and apostolic in Her requirements, for you tell me you grant it. I need only ask you, Why do you not endeavour—why do you not desire to obey Her?"

The clock on the mantel-piece struck half-past five—Miss Riley started from her seat.

"Oh, Lotte!" exclaimed she, "how quickly the time has passed! I had no idea it was so late! I am very sorry to interrupt you, but I must run home as fast as I can. Even now mama must be marvelling at my long absence."

Charlotte did not at all regret that their conversation should be broken in upon just at that moment; neither was Arthur anxious then to prolong it, as his object in discussing such topics with his sister was to turn her mind to the subject of religion; and he thought if she left such a question as he had just put unanswered, it was more likely to dwell in her thought than if she had contrived to reply to it with more ingenuity than honesty.

CHAPTER IX.

“LOTTE, dearest,” said Anna, as they left the drawing-room together, after bidding the rest of the family good night, “come into my room for a moment, I want to speak to you. Will you go to church with me to-morrow?”

“To-morrow, Anna? No; don’t ask me. I don’t think I can.”

“Why not?” asked Anna, quietly.

“Oh, don’t you understand? I’ll go with you, perhaps, in a day or two; but if I go to-morrow, the very first opportunity after our talk about it, Arthur will think I mean to grant all he said. It would be like pledging myself, and I cannot tell what it would lead to.”

“Never mind what it would lead to, Lotte,” returned her cousin. “If it’s right in itself, it can lead to nothing wrong. Do come, Lotte.”

“It’s no use urging me so,” replied Charlotte, rather pettishly; “I have not thought enough about it. You are worse than

Arthur ; he never tries to worry me into anything."

" I did not mean to worry you, dearest Lotte," replied her cousin, gently. " Perhaps I have been wrong to say so much, but you must forgive me. I only wished you to form a practice that has so greatly benefitted me. You are not angry with me, Lotte—are you?"

" It is you must forgive me, Anna, for speaking so crossly to you. I am rather vexed about it altogether, and vented my ill humour upon you. I wish going to church would make me as good and kind as you are. I think then I would go in spite of everything."

" I wish I could persuade you to try it, dearest."

Charlotte shook her head, kissed her cousin affectionately, and left the room without giving any sign of compliance.

Nevertheless, when Anna rose the next morning, she thought it possible that Charlotte might have changed her mind. She therefore entered her bedroom before going down stairs, to see if there were any chance of being accompanied by her. The first glance showed her that her slight hope had

been unfounded. Charlotte sat beside her window wrapped in her dressing-gown, eagerly reading a new novel.

“Ah, Anna!” exclaimed she, laughing, “your tell-tale face betrays your errand here. You thought I did not know my own mind last night. Is it not so? But you see, my dear, I am far from being prepared for any Quixotic enterprise this morning.”

“Good bye, then,” said Anna; “I have no time to spare,” and she hurried away, leaving Charlotte in no mood to continue her novel-reading.

“I had partly hoped to have seen Charlotte with you this morning,” said Arthur, as they again walked home together. “She seemed so silent and thoughtful last night, that I fancied she was weighing in her mind our morning’s conversation.”

“I thought so too,” replied Miss Marsden; “and urged her, perhaps more than was right, to join us, but I could not move her. She seemed very unwilling to come.”

“Did she give any reasona?” asked Arthur.

“She said something about pledging herself to your opinion, and not knowing where that first step might lead her.”

“Poor Charlotte,” returned he, “begins to fear, I think, that we are not sent into this life entirely to seek for earthly pleasure, but she has accustomed herself to look upon an attempt to live a holy life as involving something sad and gloomy. Cannot you teach her, by your strict conduct and cheerful countenance, that religion and melancholy do not belong to each other?”

“Indeed,” replied Anna, “I wish I could believe it possible to be of use to my dear cousin; but you have already perceived, Mr. Fosdyke, that I am too fearful of attracting notice, and receiving censure, to be useful as an example to any one, even if other considerations did not too often involve me in inconsistency.”

“But you must remember,” said Arthur, smiling, “if you keep the promise you made me yesterday, in looks if not in words, that you will strive to overcome the weakness you lament. You made one effort at the breakfast table yesterday. You did not, I trust, find it so dreadful as to deter you from attempting to repeat it.”

“Oh no,” returned she, also smiling; “the moment the words had passed my lips, I was surprised at having fancied I should

find it so difficult ; but you do not know how uncomfortable I was before I made my little confession. From the moment you persuaded me that I must really volunteer the observation till the speech was made I felt quite miserable."

" Do not apply so strong a word to what was so trifling," said Arthur. " Think how puzzled you would be to find an adequate expression if you were speaking of any real trial. I have no doubt, though, you were really very uncomfortable as you said, but it was soon over. Little efforts of that sort are always more formidable when contemplated from a distance. If you grapple with them boldly they disappear at once ; and even in greater difficulties," added he, gravely, " where great stedfastness is required in the execution of our duty, if we resolutely attempt to perform it in dependence on His aid who always helps those who ask His assistance, we shall find we have a strength above our own given us which enables us to encounter and overcome with unexpected facility the obstacles we dread."

Their conversation at this moment was suspended by perceiving Mr. Fosdyke approaching them with a spud in his hand.

Anna felt thankful that she had found courage the day before to make the avowal of which they had been speaking, as her appearance at that hour and place with Arthur would otherwise have made an explanation necessary.

“ Well, Arthur,” said his father, pointing to a heap of weeds, “ you, I suppose, have been labouring in your vocation, as I have in mine, only you have not so much to show as the result of your morning’s work.”

“ Very true, sir,” replied Arthur, “ but the fruits of our exertions may not necessarily be unreal because they are invisible.”

“ Possibly not,” returned Mr. Fosdyke; “ but if you content yourself with striving after imperceptible events, you must be satisfied to forego all the praise that we more tangibly industrious people receive. Anna, I hope your silence proceeds from astonished admiration at the evidence you see of my activity. But no!” added he, with a smile that she did not altogether relish, “ I forget: you, I suppose, join Arthur in rejoicing in seeking after your imaginary results.”

Poor Anna began to find that if she need not fear positive censure at Fosdyke Lodge, she must expect, if she adhered to what she

had been taught to consider right, to meet with a degree of ridicule which might still more severely try her powers of endurance. She turned towards her companion, to see how he liked his father's observations; but she found no appearance of sympathy there. He looked perfectly unruffled, and seemed waiting for her to reply to Mr. Fosdyke.

"Women are not so much accustomed to witness any results to their actions as men are," answered she, after an almost awkward pause, "and have therefore less temptation to feel impatient if they do not see the effects of their efforts."

Anna apparently felt but little anxiety at this moment to discover the effects she had herself produced, for she gladly took advantage of hearing the sound of the breakfast bell to exclaim that she was afraid she was late, and hastily to make her escape through the hall.

"Oh, Mr. Fosdyke," began Miss Marden, rather reproachfully, as Arthur joined them in the boudoir, as was his wont, about half an hour before luncheon, "you were really unkind to me this morning. I am sure you saw how uncomfortable your father's observation made me, but you made no attempt

to come to my relief. Do not you think that was unfriendly, Lotte? It was about going to church."

"I should be sorry," returned Arthur, "that you should really think me unkind, Miss Marsden. I did see you were taken by surprise, and felt very much inclined to come to your assistance; but then it occurred to me that I could not always be near to fight your battles, and that in many respects it would be better for you to learn to parry, or to bear my father's attacks. The next time you are subjected to one, I advise you not to run away as you did this morning."

"And I advise you, Arthur," said his sister, "to call our cousin by her Christian name, if you mean to take her to task like that. I would not be scolded as Miss Marsden, if I were you, Anna."

"There is something incongruous in it certainly," replied Anna; "and as I have already promised to submit to be lectured, I had better relinquish the dignity of being called Miss Marsden."

"Anna and Arthur will assuredly sound more cousinly," said Arthur; "but tell me," added he, "that you acquit me of intentional unkindness this morning."

“I dare say,” returned Anna, “you did not intend it, but I really thought it very barbarous at the time. Will you never give me a helping hand when you see me in a predicament?” asked she, half laughing, half beseechingly.

“I will not positively say never,” replied he, smiling, “for fear I might some day give way to a weak feeling of pity upon seeing you very hard pressed; but you had better never expect any assistance from me, and then you will learn to trust to your own resources, and to endure what you cannot avoid.”

“Well, Arthur,” said Charlotte, “you are really very hard-hearted; but you are right, nevertheless, in this case. You should not do ridiculous things, Anna, if you do not like to be laughed at.”

“I do not like to be laughed at at all, Lotte,” returned her cousin; “but I must do what I think right, or at least I must mean and try to do what is right, however disagreeable it is.”

“Obedience that is yielded without pain and difficulty,” said Arthur, “is scarcely worthy of the name. We should endeavour to rejoice when the performance of any ac-

knowledged duty is attended with some degree of pain, as that will afford us a test that we should otherwise need of our own sincerity, and show us if we are willing to suffer rather than relinquish a duty. At Langley, Anna, you used to attend the daily prayers without difficulty of any kind. You had been taught to consider the power of doing so a privilege, and I have no doubt practically felt the advantage of beginning each day by dedicating it to God; confessing to Him your sins, asking and receiving His forgiveness of them, thanking Him for past comforts, and supplicating Him for future blessings. But this, though undoubtedly a great privilege, is also in your case a stringent duty. What means had you at Langley of testing your own sense of this? How could you satisfy yourself that your determination to obey the Church, and your appreciation of the blessing of being able to join in public prayer, were strong enough to keep you in the right path, if you found any difficulties in your way?"

"But you think," said Anna in reply, "that at Fosdyke Lodge I shall be in no such doubt; that I shall continue to find what you call difficulties?"

“I think you will,” returned he, smiling. “I do not want to frighten you; but it is as well you should be prepared to meet with a little ridicule. And I expect you to be able to stand it without flinching, and without looking to your neighbour for support, or running away either.”

“There is one comfort for me in all this, Anna,” said Charlotte; “if being laughed at is likely to do you so much good, I may quiz you to my heart’s content, and I shall enjoy it very much, I can assure you.”

“Nay, Lotte,” returned her friend, “I do not believe you; besides, I am afraid I should not care enough about your rattle, as far as concerned myself. But I should be very sorry to see you amusing yourself by quizzing any thing connected with sacred subjects.”

“Well, let us go to luncheon now,” replied Charlotte, “for the bell rang hours ago, and mama will think you add fasting to your other crotchets, and have made a convert of me.”

“Stay an instant, Lotte,” said Anna. “May I ask you one question, Arthur, before we go,” continued she a little doubtfully, “without being thought impertinent?”

"That I am sure I shall not think," returned he. "Ask what you like, and if I can answer it honestly I will; and if not, you will forgive me for holding my tongue."

"Oh, it is a question easily answered," replied she. "Do you find difficulties in your way, such as you tell me I shall find in mine?"

"Oh, I can answer that question myself," cried Charlotte. "Arthur minds nothing of that sort. The shafts of ridicule whistle around him, and fall innocuous to the ground. I wish he would give me his receipt for indifference."

"You had better let me answer for myself, Lotte," said he, "if you wish Anna to hear the truth. I do not ask you, Anna," continued he, gravely turning to her, "to submit to a trial that I have never undergone, to which I do not daily find myself subjected. I do not speak of it lightly to you, because I have found it myself an easy one to bear, but because I know that both you and I have power to meet and overcome it, and that conviction should make us contemplate all trials cheerfully, whether to be borne by ourselves or our friends. It is not agreeable to a man whose great aim is to

live consistently, and to acknowledge nothing theoretically without practically acting upon it, to be treated as an enthusiastic visionary. It is not agreeable to be spared grave censure, because one's deepest and most cherished convictions are considered too contemptible to be met with any thing but scorn from those whose esteem and affection are one's greatest earthly good. I wish I dared tell you, Anna, that I bear this as I ought to do; that I had learnt to conquer all rebellious murmurings, and that I could listen calmly to contempt and ridicule with an unruffled temper and a tranquil spirit. But though I may not assert so much, I may safely say it is more nearly the case than it used to be, and that by degrees you will learn the same lesson. Charlotte," added he, turning to his sister, "promise you will not repeat to any one what I have now said. Such words sound too much like a complaint, which I am far from meaning. Nothing of the sort ever crossed my lips before; and they would not now have made their way out, but that I thought it might be useful to Anna to know that others have their small troubles as well as herself. Let us go to luncheon."

"I cannot tell you, Anna," said Charlotte, as they met for a moment's chat, before separating for the night, "how much surprised I was at what Arthur said this morning about finding ridicule a trial. I wanted to have made him talk more about it, but I was so much astonished, and so occupied in recalling to my mind a hundred different little scenes, that I did not know exactly what to say to him."

"You had always thought him insensible to it—had you?" asked Anna.

"Quite, for the last year or two," replied Charlotte. "I remember a long time ago, perhaps about the first year after he went to college, he used to be more vehement in defending himself, when he was laughed at, than he is now; but I never remember him laughed out of doing anything—never; even when we were all children, if he took up a notion that the thing was right, he would do it spite of all the quizzing in the world; and as he grew older he would argue a great deal to show that he was right, and try to make us acknowledge it—the Belcombs and me, I mean. We were always together as children, though they are rather older than we are, and the girls are all married now."

"But, then," said Anna, "you must have known he cared about what people thought of him; for if he took so much trouble to make you see that he was right, it must have been because he did not like to be thought wrong."

"Yes, I suppose so then," returned Lotte, "but he is quite different now—in his manner of arguing, I mean. Do you not observe that he always discusses a subject as if, at the time, he forgot that he had anything to do with it himself. He seems so taken up with the actual truth, or what he conceives to be the actual truth of his opinion, that he never considers that the question of his being right or wrong is involved in it."

"It is that, I think," returned Anna, "that gives so great a charm to his manner of treating a discussion. He seems to argue all for the sake of the truth, and nothing for victory."

"It is really so now, I believe," replied Charlotte, "though some time ago he certainly loved victory as well as truth; but, Anna, tell me, did you not think, from the little specimens you have seen, that he cared not a rush for being thought Quixotic in his religious notions—as far as concerned himself, I mean?"

"I could not quite tell, Lotte," returned her cousin, "and that was the reason I asked him. I know people can suffer a good deal, and show no outward signs of it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Charlotte, "I never could do that. I laugh or cry, just as the feeling takes me, before every body. It's very disagreeable sometimes, but I cannot help it. I cannot conceive, Anna, how it is you are always so calm and tranquil. Nothing ever seems to fret you. Were you always so?"

"All the circumstances," replied Anna, "that gave a colouring to my childhood and early youth were so different from yours, Lotte, that they naturally turned me out rather a different creature. I have been brought up alone, you know. I never had a companion—a friend who could sympathize with me. You can scarcely understand that, but perhaps you can guess how very much that makes me love you, my dear kind Lotte," and Anna Marsden threw her arms round Charlotte with a warmth and eagerness that delighted her more demonstrative cousin.

CHAPTER X.

“YOU were speaking the other day of fasting, Charlotte,” said Arthur, the next time the three young people found themselves together in the boudoir, “as a crotchet, and I suppose the same view is taken of it by many others besides yourself. Nevertheless, it appears strange to me, and I think it cannot fail to do so to every Christian who will examine the subject with an unprejudiced mind, that the duty—the undeniably Christian duty of fasting should have been so generally neglected as it is at present among ourselves. We are the only organised body of Christians that have ever existed that have not recognised it as a duty. Indeed, our own branch of the Church Catholic has always recognised it as such; for the Church still bids Her members fast, though, unhappily for us, She has lost for the present the power of enforcing obedience in that or in any other respect.”

“I do not know what you mean, Arthur,” replied his sister, “by our Church bidding us fast. I thought fasting was one of the

many superstitious observances that were abolished at the Reformation."

" So far from its having been abolished," returned he, " either then or since, you have only to turn to a Prayer-book bearing the date of the current year, if you happen to have one, and you will there find twenty-six days, besides the forty days of Lent and every Friday in the year, set down to be observed as days of fasting or abstinence. The Prayer-book, drawn up by the Reformers, to whom people now-a-days are recurring as the sanctioners of every thing that savours of laxity, condemns our present habits in a way plain to the comprehension of every one; and their individual practice equally tells against us, to those who are acquainted with their lives."

" Is it not strange, too," said Anna, " that people who profess—and I am sure, in very many instances, really believe themselves to be guided by Scripture—should overlook there, the injunctions to fast? Has not fasting in a great measure the same ground to rest on that prayer and almsgiving have?"

" Certainly," replied Arthur. " You allude to the Sermon on the Mount, where our Lord tells us how we ought to pray, how to

give alms, and how to fast. It appears to me that we have three reasons for fasting, any one of which ought to be sufficient to induce us to do so. We have, first, Scripture, which contains both our blessed Lord's commands and many instances of apostolic example; we have the injunctions of the Church, of which we profess ourselves members; and we have the examples of all holy men who have preceded us."

"On the ground of expedience alone," said Anna, who began now to express her opinions as freely before Arthur as to Charlotte, "one would imagine that an earnest man, bent heart and soul to accomplish the one great object for which he is created—to live to the glory of God, and work out his own salvation with fear and trembling—would eagerly catch at every aid to a holy life that could be presented to him. Does it not look like presumption in us to refuse an assistance, of which the greatest saints have made use?"

"That is, of course, the lowest ground on which you can take it," replied Arthur, "but to my mind it is a strong one."

"Well, but, Arthur," said his sister, "and Anna too, for you both seem to take the

same side of the question, though this is the first time I ever heard you hold forth on the subject—my dear opponents both, let us discuss it on the ground of expedience, as you say. How can fasting conduce to a holy life? First of all tell me what do you mean by fasting?"

Arthur turned for a moment towards Anna, but she was so evidently preparing to listen, and not to speak, that he replied to the question that was addressed to them jointly.

"I look upon fasting," said he, "as such a change in or lessening of our usual food, as shall mortify the flesh. The extent to which the practice of fasting should be carried in each individual case cannot be determined, and happily it need not. We are each of us the best judge of what is practicable in our own case. The health and external position of each of us differ. When the health permits it, and the habit has been long acquired, and the individual is so circumstanced as to be able to make the day of fasting a day of retirement for prayer and meditation, a much stricter fast might be kept than could be observed by a person first recognising the duty and then attempt-

ing to perform it, perhaps surrounded by those who blame, or at least ridicule, the practice, and to whose opinion much deference may be due."

"Well, then," said Charlotte, "supposing me to understand the extent—which I don't exactly yet—but suppose me to comprehend that we are all to judge for ourselves of the extent to which we are to fast, tell me, pray, how is it to benefit us? what good are we likely to get by fasting?"

"I might tell you, Charlotte," answered Arthur, "that a blessing is sure to attend obedience; but I believe you confined me now to the third reason which I brought forward. We are to argue it only as a measure of expedience. I must bring you to admit that the Church has of right authority over you, before you can feel that obedience to Her will be followed by the blessing of God. I will acknowledge that fasting in itself, as an act by itself, is of no use. We mistake the intention of it, if we look upon it as an end, and not as a means. I am not surprised that a person who has never tried it herself, nor been taught to consider it as a duty, should be doubtful as to its efficacy. We must all feel, dear Lotte, the

most thoughtless among us must feel at times that we are too much drawn away from God, and our hearts and minds filled too exclusively with the things that perish. How apt are we at these times to say to ourselves, that if we were differently placed, if the world, with its pleasures and its pains, its cares and its allurements, was not so close upon us on this side and on that at all moments, we would turn our thoughts to God: and this is true of most of us. There is a spark of love to God—of thankfulness to Christ—in our hearts. God's Holy Spirit, given to each of us in our Baptism, is still within us; buried and well-nigh stifled it may be by sin, but it is still there, capable of sanctifying our souls and bodies if we will strive, in dependence upon God's assisting grace, so plentifully given to those that ask it in faith, to cast out the sinful affections and unholy thoughts that clog its motions. If while we are so striving we find that external sights and sounds, the veriest trifles, too small to be mentioned, yet too numerous not to make their influence felt, lead us away from the narrow path in which we desire to walk, will it not be our wisdom to seize some of these external trifles, and

make them tell on the other side? Fasting will be one means of doing this. If we fast as our Church in Her care for our welfare bids us, no week will pass without one day being spent chiefly in repentance and humiliation before God. What we suffer on that day—if we may venture to call the slight inconvenience to which we shall probably expose ourselves by such a name—what we suffer will remind us of our Lord's sufferings on the cross, which our sins called for; we shall remember that this outward act of humiliation is but a mockery, if it be not accompanied by repentance. We cannot forget that we are sinners while we are undergoing a discipline which our sins have made necessary for us. By strictly adhering to the rule that we lay down for ourselves, we shall accustom ourselves to resist temptation: let not those who have not tried it ridicule the idea that it is such. The very slightness of the temptation, if I may so speak, makes the trial. It is so trifling a thing, we are apt to say: true, we meant to fast, but to-day we particularly feel the need of our usual food; in this one point we will transgress, and keep our resolution more strictly hereafter. Here is the discipline:

we resist, and having overcome the temptation, are more likely to overcome the next that assails us. The habitual practice of relinquishing some of the innocent gratifications of this life for Christ's sake, and in obedience to the commands of His Church, will lead us on to self-denials in other matters. A little practical acquaintance with the inconvenience of privation would make us more compassionate to the wants of others. You esteem fasting in itself a slight and insignificant act: perform it in humble obedience to the Church of which you profess yourself a member, and it will encourage in you a disposition of submission and docility which is the greatest preservative against error."

For a moment there was a silence, and then Charlotte said, "Well, Anna—I appealed to you both—what have you to say?"

"Nothing," replied her cousin, "but that I am very glad your brother has left me nothing to say. I can only thank him for so well expressing what I would have endeavoured to have said, dear Lotte, if you had been without an abler guide than myself."

"But I want particularly," said Charlotte,

"to hear what you individually would say."

"Why so?" returned Anna. "Do I not tell you that Arthur has said all I think and feel much better than I could have done?"

"Yes, that is just it," replied Charlotte, half pettishly, half in jest. "Perhaps I should have caught you in some absurdity. There might have been some weak point for me to put my finger upon; but all that Arthur has said sounds so reasonable, and yet is so opposite to all my preconceived notions and favourite opinions, that it rather puts me out."

"My dear sister," said Arthur gravely, "let me beg you never to approach the discussion of any thing bearing upon sacred subjects in such a spirit as you have now avowed. Do not, I entreat you, listen or read with only a desire to cavil. Consider well upon what your opinions are grounded: if you have reason to think they have been taken up without due examination, and hitherto held carelessly, you will perceive that you cannot be wise or safe in driving from you, or in obstinately refuting, all arguments that tell against them."

Before Charlotte could reply he had left

the room. She started as she heard the door close behind him, and hastily exclaimed,

“Oh, Anna! I have made him angry. How sorry I am! What did I say to make him speak so gravely and go so abruptly?”

“I don’t think he was angry, Charlotte,” said Anna; “but he was grieved to hear you speak lightly of what he had been speaking so seriously.”

“I am sure,” returned Charlotte, “I did not mean to say anything to annoy him; or to speak lightly, as you call it. I only meant to say I do not want to think with him; and I cannot help that you know, Anna. If he is right and it is necessary to lead as strict a life as he does, how very wicked I must be. Even you, Anna, are not so particular in a thousand ways as he is; and I should be miserable if I were as strict as you are.”

“No, dearest Charlotte,” returned Anna, half smiling for a moment, “if you were to be as strict as I am as a matter of duty, you would soon find it brought its own comfort with it. Miserable is a strong word,” added she gravely, “that I scarcely dare apply to you or to myself; but, doubtless, the more

you succeeded in fulfilling any of your religious or social duties, the more bitterly you would lament any failure in doing so: but this would be a strange reason for not attempting to live a conscientious life. We are so much the creatures of habit, that there is no state of mind even to which we may not accustom ourselves; but I can conceive none that so much deserves the name of miserable as a conviction, a fear even, that we are leading a life of sin and forgetfulness of God, without sufficient strength of resolution to amend our way."

" You mean to say that is my state?" said Charlotte.

" Nay dearest, I know not," replied her cousin. " You are the only judge; but, just now, you almost seemed to express such a feeling. If it is so in any degree, do not force the subject from your mind, as if you feared the result to which reflection and prayer might bring you. Remember, if you are wrong—if a life spent in such enjoyment of its blessings as to leave no room for self-denial, with little time given to prayer, and none to repentance, be sinful in itself, and an unmeet preparation for the eternal life of holiness we desire to live here-

after, how important it is you should, without loss of time, turn to some safer way."

The colour in her cheek rose rapidly as she spoke, but disappeared again without Charlotte's having perceived how deeply Anna felt what she had said, as she had not raised her eyes from the drawing that lay before her. She gave no reply, and after a moment's pause Anna said gently,

"Charlotte, I have not made you angry?"

"No," said she, rising from her chair; "you have only tired me."

But the tear that she brushed from her eye as she turned away told of more than weariness.

CHAPTER XI.

UPON the evening of the day on which the foregoing conversation took place in the boudoir there was a dinner party at Fosdyke Lodge, for the purpose of receiving Mr. and Mrs. Dampierre for the first time since their arrival at Chollerton Rectory. Mr. Dampierre's very gentlemanlike appear-

ance and demeanour could not fail to impress every one in his favour ; and when they partially broke up the party by leaving it at a somewhat early hour, even Mr. Fosdyke had, for the time, forgotten, even if he were not quite prepared to forgive, his having commenced his career among them by so strange a novelty as opening the church for week-day services.

It was generally conceded, too, that Mrs. Dampierre was pretty, gentle in her manners, and quietly agreeable. This topic having received the attention of nearly all the remaining guests, Lady Belcomb, who, with her son, were among them, was heard to say,

“ Miss Marsden has just been telling me, Edward, that she has not yet seen Scarborough Cove. This, I think, must be remedied immediately ; and as I expect you to arrange all my attempts at rural merry-makings now that I have lost my dear Julia, I beg to place the affair at once in your hands.”

“ I accept the trust with pleasure,” returned Sir Edward,

“ ‘ And will in all my best obey you, madam.’
First, let me reckon our numbers. Miss

Marsden, as heroine of the *fête*, must stand first on my list. You, Charlotte, and the Miss Rileys," continued he, with a questioning look towards these last-named young ladies, "will make four."

" You must excuse me, Sir Edward," said Mary; " we cannot both leave my mother for the whole day—at least, I would rather not do so."

" I know of old, Miss Riley," replied he, " that you are immoveable on a point of this kind; so, though unwillingly, I must scratch you off my list."

" And suppose, Edward," suggested Lady Belcomb, " as a substitute—a bad one for you, dear Mary—you include little Grace Tremble among our damsels. A pic-nic at the Cove, where dancing and all such iniquities are quite impossible, is one of the few pleasures in which the poor child is allowed to participate."

" Very well, mother," said Sir Edward, " Miss Tremble is admitted without a dissentient voice apparently. Mrs. Fosdyke, may I put you down as one of us?"

" If Lady Belcomb goes," replied their hostess, " you can have no need of me in the capacity of chaperon, Sir Edward, and I shall be glad to escape it."

“ My mother,” returned he, “ accompanies us of course, and so does Mr. Fosdyke. I need make a formal application to neither of them. Mrs. Travers,” continued he, approaching the old lady, “ it is useless to ask you; you have too often refused me the same request in bygone days.”

“ Very true, Sir Edward; and increasing years do not, I assure you, incline me to relinquish my comfortable lunch and my comfortable dinner, each partaken of at a reasonable hour, for the questionable gratification of making an anomalous meal, half one and half the other, at your most uncomfortable Cove.”

“ Ah!” exclaimed he, as he retreated, laughing, “ I was afraid the mere mention of the possibility of wishing you would join us would draw from you a sarcasm upon our ruralities. Stonehurst,” continued he, addressing a young man who was considered as belonging to their immediate circle, “ you will give up fishing for a day, and enroll yourself among us?”

“ Without fail,” returned he; “ fishing has become only a *pis aller* with me, and such a pic-nic as you are planning ranks foremost among our country sports.”

"Arthur and I, then," resumed Sir Edward, "complete our number. Some of us, I think, will enjoy riding over the cliffs. Charlotte, I suppose you are as valiant a horsewoman as ever. What say you, Miss Marsden, will you ride or go by water?"

"Either way," returned Anna, "I should think delightful. Perhaps riding would be most enjoyable. Shall you ride, Lotte?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Miss Fosdyke, "and you must ride, too, Anna. We will leave our horses at the little inn on the cliffs, just beyond the Cove. We shall have to scramble down the rock, but you will not mind that, Anna. You seem to manage it as well as if your life had been spent, as mine has been, in rambling about our coasts."

"Mr. Fosdyke," continued Sir Edward, going on with his arrangements, "will you take charge of my mother and the two remaining young ladies by water? I know, Miss Riley, you are no equestrian, though if you feel inclined to mount, I should be very happy to see you try the horse my sister used to ride."

This was a most tantalizing proposal to poor Louisa. She saw the party she would most like to join was to ride. To be made

over to Mr. Fosdyke, Lady Belcomb, and little quiet Grace Tremble, even presuming Mr. Stonehurst were to be joined to the water-party, was very sad when there seemed a possibility of her being included among the set escorted by Sir Edward and Arthur Fosdyke, with either of whom she was ready to establish a running flirtation ; but, as Sir Edward had too truly said, she was no horsewoman, and she felt something like alarm at the idea of trusting herself to the spirited though well-tutored steed that was offered her.

“ A thousand thanks, Sir Edward,” said she in reply. “ I should greatly like to ride ; I am quite tired of going to Scarborough Cove by water. I do not know quite, but I think, under your guardianship, perhaps I might venture to mount.”

“ Indeed, Louisa,” said her more prudent sister, “ you had better not attempt it. You know you have never been on horseback, and it would be very provoking if you were frightened and obliged to give it up after the water-party had started.”

“ Mary is quite right, Louisa,” said Charlotte ; “ and even supposing nothing of that sort happened, you would be dreadfully tired.

It's much too long a ride for a beginner in the art."

The particularly disagreeable idea conjured up by Miss Riley, that attempting to ride might cause her to be left behind altogether, decided the point with the fair Louisa; and she consented, though with but an ill grace, to be enrolled among the boat party. During the little discussion produced by the thoughtless observation that he could lend her a horse, Sir Edward remained rather upon tenter-hooks, inasmuch as he by no means relished the idea of watching the reins and sustaining the courage of Miss Louisa Riley, instead of gratifying the newly-aroused interest which he found in the conversation of Anna Marsden; and he was too well aware that the sentiment entertained towards the young lady by his friend was as nearly akin to aversion as he permitted himself to feel towards any of his species, to contemplate the shifting upon him the task from which he shrunk himself. But now that he was relieved from this little difficulty, he proceeded with his arrangements *con amore*.

"Nothing remains, then," said he, "but to name the day. What say you, friends all, to Saturday?"

“Nay,” exclaimed Mr. Stonehurst, “why not to-morrow? Why should we defer what promises to be so agreeable, particularly as the weather is so fine now, and we know not how long it may last?”

“That sounds a very sensible remark,” returned Sir Edward, “and displays a degree of forethought almost foreign to your character. Nevertheless, I would rather fix it for Saturday.”

“But, Edward,” said Lady Belcomb, “we shall require a sensible objection to Mr. Stonehurst’s sensible proposition. I believe we are all disengaged to-morrow. Have you any private project in view with which our expedition would interfere?”

“Not so,” replied he, with some little hesitation of manner not at all natural to him. “But if we go on Saturday we shall, you are aware, have the enjoyment of anticipation greatly prolonged.”

“Nonsense, Edward,” returned his mother; “do tell me if you have really any reason against going to-morrow.”

“How you wrong me by the doubt,” cried Sir Edward in a serio-comic tone.

“Can I guess your objection, Belcomb?” asked Arthur, suddenly turning round.

“Why, really Arthur,” returned his friend, “I cannot look into your heart and see if you have looked into mine.”

“If, as I suspect,” rejoined young Fosdyke, “you object to forming your party for Friday, from conceiving that I would not join you on that day, why not say so at once?”

“Possibly,” said Mr. Fosdyke, before Sir Edward could reply, “though knowing your crotchety notions himself, he kindly did not wish to expose them to others.”

“I did not withhold my reason, which Arthur has truly guessed, in the spirit you suppose, Mr. Fosdyke,” returned Sir Edward; “but while I was anxious to secure him for our party, I wished to avoid giving rise to any discussion upon the subject. Do not imagine, Fosdyke,” added he, eagerly addressing his friend, “that I suppose you would wish to shrink from avowing your principles, and that therefore I was endeavouring to shield you from the necessity of doing so.”

“You are always kind and considerate, Belcomb,” returned Arthur; “but,” added he, turning to his father, “you must feel, Sir, that if I hold certain opinions strongly

enough to act upon them, I must hold them strongly enough to dare to avow them, even at the cost of having to endure a little ridicule."

"I wish," replied Mr. Fosdyke, "you met with enough ridicule or argument, I care not which, to induce you to relinquish your absurdities."

"Oblige me, Edward," resumed Arthur, without noticing his father's observation, "by arranging your excursion for to-morrow, and letting me follow my own devices; or rather," added he, in so low a tone that it was unheard by all but his friend, "the devices of the Church, whose rule I think I am bound to obey."

"Not so, my dear friend," said Lady Belcomb; "I cannot quite follow your opinions, it is true, but I should be very unwilling to make our expedition without you. Saturday will suit us all quite as well."

"And who can tell, Arthur," said Sir Edward, turning to his friend, "but that some of us being in a measure compelled to spend one of the fast-days of our Church more soberly than we had wished, may not be brought to think it would be wise to observe them altogether?"

“Would that it might be so,” replied Arthur, “and that you, my dearest friend, were one among the number so influenced.”

Lady Belcomb’s carriage was now announced, and, after their final arrangements had been made as to the hour and place of meeting on Saturday, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

“TELL me, Anna,” said Charlotte, as they retired together, “what you thought of Arthur’s conduct to-night. I felt so uncomfortable the moment Mr. Stonehurst proposed going to-morrow; I could not help thinking of all Arthur had said to us this morning. I fancied directly he would not go, and I could not guess how he would get out of it. Did you recollect at once that to-morrow was Friday?”

“Oh, yes,” returned Anna, “I thought of it directly, and could not make up my mind what I ought to do myself; or, rather, I am afraid I could not make up my mind to do what I felt sure I ought to do, and then I

became so anxious to see how your brother would act, that I forgot to think about myself."

"Then you really think it would be wrong to join a pio-nic party on a Friday?" asked Charlotte in some astonishment.

"I am sure it would be wrong in me to do it," replied Anna, "because I make it a rule to observe, as far as I can, the Church fasts; and it is evident that it would be nonsense to attempt to fast in the manner, and with the accompaniments, that Arthur mentioned this morning, on a day which was entirely devoted to merry-making."

"Of course I see that," returned her cousin; "but I have never remarked any difference in your conduct, Anna, on a fast-day."

"Very likely not, Charlotte; but I do not think I ever forget to mark a fast-day to myself by such abstinence as I can practise without drawing attention to it, and by devoting a greater portion of the day than on other occasions to retirement."

"Do you think it wrong, then, to draw attention to it?" asked Charlotte; "should you be ashamed if you were found out?"

"You ask rather trying questions, Lotte," returned Anna. "I do not think I should

be ashamed, exactly, at being found out, but I should greatly dislike to have my practice observed and commented on. I do not conceive that it can be a duty in a person so insignificant as I am to draw attention to my observances for the sake of example, though I must be ready, if occasion calls for it, to avow that I feel bound to obey the Church, rather than transgress Her rule."

"Then," returned Charlotte, "if Arthur had said nothing about it, or if they had arranged to go without him to-morrow, you would have declined joining them, and given your reason as he did?"

"I don't know, Lotte," said Anna, colouring slightly; "I cannot tell. I am sure I ought to have done so, but I did not feel this evening as if I had courage enough. I could not determine what to do during the moment I had for thinking."

"I am surprised, Anna," said her cousin, "at your feeling so; I thought you always quietly did what you thought right, without considering the consequences."

"I wish I did, Charlotte," replied Anna; "if we could get the habit of doing right at once, without considering the possibility and probable comfort for the moment of doing

wrong, we should be spared a great deal of doubt and difficulty. You think me surprisingly weak and wicked, Lotte, for not imitating Arthur to-night?" added she in a tone of inquiry.

"No, indeed, dearest, I do not," returned her friend; "I am quite sure, however wrong I thought it, I could not have braved Lady Belcomb's well-bred look of suppressed astonishment, Mr. Stonehurst's curling lips, Louisa Riley's open titter, and my dear father's bitter sarcasm, all of which you would have had to encounter, had you said what Arthur did. It is the strong consciousness I have that I could not bear this sort of thing, that makes me so very unwilling to believe that it is necessary to expose myself to it."

"But, Lotte," said Anna, "the fact of it's being singularly disagreeable does not make it the less right. I wish that I had summoned courage enough to-night to have braved all that."

"You need not wish that now," returned Charlotte, "for Arthur got you out of the scrape without your having to say a word."

"But I am not sure," replied Anna, "that I am quite out of the scrape yet. I dare say Arthur will take the first opportunity of

telling me how weakly and wrongly I was acting."

"The first opportunity," returned Charlotte, "will be to-morrow morning, as you come from church, I suppose."

"I wish, Lotte, you would go with me to-morrow," said her cousin.

"What a coward you are, Anna," replied Charlotte, laughing. "I cannot really encourage you in any such nonsense, and it would do no good either; for if Arthur thought fit to harangue you privately, he would not in the least scruple saying, 'Anna, will you come into the next room with me, I want to speak to you,' so you would not escape, and very little delay the evil hour."

"Then I will sleep away the moments that intervene," said Anna; and, bidding each other good night, they separated.

This was not the only private conference that was held that night by the inmates of Fosdyke Lodge.

"Arthur," said his mother, as she took from his hand her lighted bed candle, "let me have five minutes' talk with you in my dressing-room. My dear Arthur," resumed Mrs. Fosdyke, as soon as they had reached

her room, "I need not with you attempt any preface to what I am about to say. I wish to give you a hint of what you must be ignorant of, and to accompany it by a caution, to which I am sure you will endeavour to attend."

"Most assuredly, dearest mother," returned the young man; "any advice from you will be received with my best attention. But you look grave. Have I already unwittingly given you cause for uneasiness?"

"Not so, my dear son," replied his mother; "but my mind is running upon past scenes, that I can never recall without sadness. It is of your young cousin that I wish to speak to you. She is very lovely, very captivating, to all appearances very amiable. To me, Arthur, she seems precisely the person formed to attract you."

Arthur started as if these words suggested an idea that had never before entered his mind.

"Do not tell me," continued she, "that my warning comes too late; but believe me when I say that your father will never willingly consent to receive Anna as a daughter. I cannot now, and, unless you greatly wish it, I would rather at no future time recount

to you the sad scenes in which he and Mrs. Marsden have been partakers in their early youth. You will understand that there is no objection that personally attaches to Anna; but, I repeat, your father will never willingly see her mother's daughter more nearly connected with us than she is now."

" You have taken me very much by surprise, mother," returned he, " and brought before my mind a catastrophe that it had never yet contemplated. Anna Marsden, as you say, combines singular attractions; sufficiently so, perhaps, to render the judiciousness of allowing me to feel the effect of them in the unrestrained intimacy of every-day life somewhat doubtful, while my father entertains the feeling with regard to her that you have mentioned. Under different circumstances I might, I confess, have conceived it unwise to expose myself to the dangers of constant intercourse with her after the warning you have now given me; but situated as I am, with my mind finally made up as to the line of life I wish to pursue, neither you nor my father need fear that I shall attach myself in the manner you deprecate."

" My dear Arthur," exclaimed Mrs. Fos-

dyke, in a tone almost of alarm, “what do you mean? you suggest an idea almost more painful to me than the one you dispel. I hope you are not taking up any wild notions against marrying. I know you well enough to feel sure that any resolution you form will not easily be thrown aside. It makes me wretched to think you are running into all these extreme and novel opinions that cause so much alarm to moderate people.”

“Do not make yourself uneasy about it, dear mother,” answered he with a slight smile; “be assured no wild notions will run away with me;” and then he added, more gravely, “our Church holds, as She has ever held, the true *via media*, and only desiring to believe as She teaches in all things, I am not likely to run into extremes. She does not hold that celibacy is necessary for Her priesthood, and therefore I will prescribe no such rule for myself. I will not say that I do not think it desirable that God’s ministers should have as few ties to earth as needs be, and be able to carry to their sacred duties a singleness of heart and a devotedness that can scarcely be found in a married man. We know that ‘he that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord,

how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.' I will by God's help strive to keep my heart and energies entire for His service; but I dare not say that I am secure against this or any other temptation of the world. But this I think I may say, mother, without a too presumptuous confidence in my own strength, that now, while I am preparing for my ordination vows, and considering the high and sacred duties on which I hope ere long to be allowed to enter, my heart is safe from the sentiments my father wishes me to guard against."

"It is impossible for me to attempt to argue with you, Arthur," returned his mother. "I can only say that these sort of notions distress me very much. I always hate extreme opinions on any subject: nothing is so apt to lead one into inconvenience, and your father highly disapproves of the style of thing. My great hope is that he may be right in thinking that a little practical acquaintance with the world will show you how impossible it is to live in a certain class of society without conforming in a gentlemanlike degree to the customs of

those among whom we move. Nothing, I thought, could be in worse taste than your uncalled-for announcement to-night."

"I am very sorry, mother," replied Arthur, "if I annoyed you to-night; but I still hope you will think that I could not honestly have avoided saying what I did. You do not think it would have been fair to Belcomb if I had left him to fight my battles, because I was too cowardly to come forward myself."

"But you should not have any battles to fight," replied his mother, "upon grounds so absurd. High-flown opinions do no harm if only held speculatively, and may even do good, I dare say, as every body should have a high standard. I quite agree with what people say about having a high standard; but I do not see the necessity of offending people's prejudices, and running counter to the generally received maxims of the world. Of course I would not have you do anything that was wrong, and as you will insist upon going into the Church, I should not object to a certain degree of strictness. I shall not be at all distressed at your giving up dancing, though some people think that great nonsense; but I know several very gentle-

manlike young clergyman who don't dance. But it's no use now, I know, trying to talk you into more reasonable views. A few years mixing with the world will, I dare say, work a reformation."

Arthur wished his mother good night very affectionately, and left her, resolving in his own mind that if he found that mixing in the world was likely to be attended with the consequences she predicted, he would make it his study as much as possible, without relinquishing his duties in it, to retire from it.

Miss Marsden was right in supposing that Arthur would not allow the first opportunity that offered itself to pass without an allusion to what had occurred in the drawing-room. The next morning he said, without preface of any kind,

" You left to me alone last night the task of asserting principles that we both hold in common."

" As your objection was sufficient to postpone the expedition," returned she, " there was no occasion for me to say anything."

" You were prepared, then," said Arthur, with a look of pleasure, " to have declined joining the party, if the excursion had been fixed for to-day?"

“No,” replied Anna frankly, “I was not.”

“What should you have done if I had not been there?” asked he in a somewhat changed tone of voice; “or, if they had consented to have gone to-day without me? Do you consider,” continued he, finding she did not reply immediately, “do you consider spending the whole day with a pic-nic party a consistent mode of keeping one of the fast-days of the Church?”

Anna still hesitated for a moment, and then selected one of his observations to which to reply.

“Why did you propose they should go without you, Arthur? You knew I should be unwilling to go to-day, and I owe you no thanks for having extricated me from a difficulty. If Lady Belcomb had consented to go without you, I should have benefitted nothing by your protest.”

“Nothing,” returned her companion drily, “except by my example, which you ought not to have needed. Have you so soon forgotten,” added he in his more usual manner, “that I warned you against expecting assistance from me in getting out of difficulties, from which your own resolution ought to be sufficient to extricate you?”

“ But what would your father have said, what would every body have thought of me, if I had said I could not join them on a fast-day? Only consider,” continued she, the colour mounting to her cheek as she pictured to herself all that Charlotte had alluded to the evening before, “ only consider how disagreeable it would have been.”

“ Very disagreeable, indeed, dear Anna,” returned Arthur; “ so disagreeable, that I would have you do everything short of what is wrong to escape it. But merely taking into consideration the amount of annoyance attaching to a right or a wrong line of conduct in this case for instance, I am inclined to think if you had gone to Seaborough Cove to-day, the idea that you were spending the day so very differently from what the Church requires from Her children would have caused you more discomfort than you would have felt from giving your reasons for refusing to go.”

“ I think that is very likely,” replied Anna; “ but it is the courage at the moment I want. The opportunity is gone, and I have done what is wrong, or avoided doing what is right, before I have time to think.”

“ That is because you allow yourself to

consider whether or no you can afford, as it were, to do what is right," returned Arthur. "If we could habituate ourselves to act immediately upon the suggestion of our conscience without a moment's debate, we should in most cases be out of a dilemma before we knew we were in one. This habit, of course, is difficult to attain; but we ought earnestly to attempt to acquire it."

Miss Marsden did not reply; and after they had walked a few yards in silence, Arthur continued,

"If you really wish, Anna, to teach yourself to speak when silence involves you in something your conscience condemns, I can easily give you a rule which, if followed closely, must be efficacious. Having tried it myself, I can from experience pronounce on its worth."

"Tell it me," said Anna; "but I am afraid your rules are likely to be as stern as your conduct is uncompromising. Your having tried it yourself does not prove that I shall find it easy."

"I will not deceive you," returned he: "I do not think you will find it easy. Whenever you are taken by surprise, and the moment passes in which you ought to

have faced any disagreeable consequences that the avowal of principles or practices might have occasioned you, take time to consider your error, and confess it to those whose ridicule or censure you had endeavoured to avoid. You will find this requires a greater effort than would have been needed to act rightly in the first instance. Thus you will correct your fault, and inflict a suitable punishment upon yourself at the same time. Will you try it, Anna?" asked he after a few minutes' pause. She gave no answer. "I shall fear," continued he, "that you have no very earnest desire to correct your faults if you shrink from all painful discipline."

"Do not think that," replied she, struggling to repress a few tears that sought to escape from her eyes: "I do desire to do what is right, and not to shrink from what is painful; but I dare not promise what I may be too weak to perform. I will promise, if you like, to think very much of your advice, to try to make up my mind to follow it, and to listen to you without impatience at any time when you point out to me that an opportunity has occurred for the exercise of your rule. Is

not that promising enough for one morning?"

"It shall content me for the present," said he; "but I shall expect you soon to tell me the result of your meditations, and you must expect me to take advantage to the utmost of the permission you have now given me for the second time to speak frankly to you."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE following morning rose bright and beautiful, and as the party assembled, according to the arrangements previously made, nobody regretted that the contemplated excursion had been deferred till that morning. Sir Edward and Arthur Fosdyke accompanied the sailing party to the beach, and saw them comfortably established in a yacht belonging to the former. This detachment consisted of Lady Belcomb, Miss Tremble, Louisa Riley, Mr. Fosdyke, and Mr. Stonehurst. To their care also were consigned two or three capacious-looking baskets, from one of which peeped two long-necked black

bottles, proving that the anomalous meal of which Mrs. Travers had spoken with so much contempt had been duly considered.

Having taken every precaution for the comfort and convenience of the ladies, the two young men returned to the Lodge, and found their horses already at the door, and Charlotte and Anna equipped in their riding costume.

“Now,” cried Sir Edward, eagerly, “let us mount at once. Remember we shall have to cross Fairfield Dean, and they have so favourable a breeze, that if we linger on our road they will reach the Cove long before us.”

“Nay, Sir Edward,” returned Charlotte, as she hastily gathered up her habit and approached her horse, “nothing but the consideration that you were in attendance on your lady mother could induce either Anna or myself to forgive your want of gallantry in having kept us so long waiting for you.”

“Reproach me not,” returned he, gaily, “and you shall see that my devotion through the day shall be most exemplary.”

“On that condition,” replied Charlotte, as

he placed her on her horse, "I restore you to favour."

"Arthur apparently finds it more difficult to make his peace with Miss Marsden," said Sir Edward, observing that they stood conversing side by side.

"On the contrary," said Anna, "I have been less repining than Charlotte. I have not put him on his defence at all."

"Then shew me," cried Sir Edward, "that you are equally indulgent to my fault by permitting me to assist you."

Arthur quietly relinquished his place by his cousin, and allowed his friend to perform for her the service she had expected to receive from him.

The first mile or two was along a road wide enough to permit of their all riding abreast. Sir Edward's place was between the ladies, and Arthur was on the other side of Anna Marsden. While they continued this order of march the conversation was general, but too desultory to admit of its being recorded.

"Here we leave the more frequented road, Miss Marsden, and enter the ground especially dedicated to pic-nics," said Sir Edward, addressing Anna in a manner that

compelled her almost to retain her position in front with him, while the narrowness of the path which he pointed out rendered it necessary for their companions to fall back. For a moment she was disappointed at the arrangement; and if she had ever addicted herself to the management of these little affairs, she would have reproached herself for not having contrived somehow to have Arthur for her especial squire. But Anna had not been instructed in this feminine art, and to some people it does not come by nature; so being happily free from self-condemnation, she gave herself up to any amusement that Sir Edward's conversation might afford; and the continued murmur of their voices, occasionally interrupted by a gay laugh, showed to their friends, who kept a few paces behind them, that their propinquity was a source of regret to neither. At first, after their partial separation, Arthur appeared to be in rather a deep reverie, and one or two of Charlotte's observations were permitted to remain without an answer; but he never allowed himself for any length of time to forget the claim that his associates for the moment had upon him; and making one vigorous effort to drive from his mind

the different thoughts that were crowding upon it, he entered into conversation with his sister. Presently they came to a more open spot of ground, and Charlotte exclaimed—

“Stay for one moment, Anna; you can just catch a glimpse now of Winborn Priory. It is the most picturesque view we have in the neighbourhood.”

“Cannot we ride up to it?” asked Anna; “it cannot be above half a mile from us, and I should so like to see it.”

“Nay,” replied Sir Edward, “I must put my veto upon that proposal, Miss Marsden. If I once allow Fosdyke to get among those ruins it will be an hour before I shall succeed in dragging him away bodily, and he will remain there in spirit all the rest of the day. Do I not speak the truth, Arthur?”

“I plead guilty to the fact of Winborn Priory being a very favourite haunt of mine,” returned his friend, “but I hope, Anna, you will not think much the worse of me for my confession.”

“I fear the very eager desire I have to go there myself at this moment,” replied Miss Marsden, “looks very much as if I shared the weakness.”

"It is a desire that cannot be gratified to-day, Anna," said Charlotte, "for Sir Edward is quite right in saying we have no time to lose, or Lady Belcomb and papa will think we have eloped in a *parti quarré*."

"But will you promise," inquired Anna, "if I relinquish my wish now with a good grace, that I shall go and see it at some not very distant day?"

"That is quite fair, and I think we may venture to engage you shall," replied Charlotte.

"Pray let me be of the party," said Sir Edward. "I am sure it must be too much for Arthur's nerves to have the charge of two young ladies on horseback."

"You have always some excellently good reason for doing what is agreeable to yourself, Sir Edward," remarked Charlotte, "but you know you are too pleasant an addition for us to reject you, even if we cannot admit that your attendance is absolutely necessary for our safety."

"Only grant me what I ask," said Sir Edward, "and I care not with what harsh and illiberal strictures on my general conduct you accompany your permission."

They had now emerged from the narrow

path and broken ground that had impeded their pace while passing through the Dean, and soon found themselves enjoying a brisk canter upon the close, soft turf that stretched itself over the bold cliff which made one of the greatest charms of that part of the country. In due course of time they reached a spot where a few partly natural, partly artificially formed steps enabled those who possessed steady heads and firm feet to descend to the beach. Here the two girls dismounted, and seated themselves on the grass, while the young men led the horses to a little inn which stood some hundred yards from the edge of the cliff. Charlotte had only just pointed out to her cousin the spot where her practised eye had detected that the yacht was already moored, and made her comprehend behind which particular jutting piece of rock she conceived their party to be reposing, when their friends returned.

“I think, Charlotte,” said her brother, briskly, as he joined them, “that you had better attempt the descent first, and show Anna the way these matters are accomplished with us. Give me your hand. All experienced as you are in the art of scram-

bling you must not despise a little assistance."

The Fosdykes descended first, and in a few moments Anna approached the cliff, and made her way to the bottom of it under the careful guardianship of Sir Edward Belcomb. Charlotte was right in fancying she had caught sight of the yacht as it danced gaily on the waters where it was moored, and a few steps brought them round the rock which had effectually concealed the sheltered nook, known by the name of Seaborough Cove, from their sight while they were on the top of the cliff. Here they found Lady Belcomb and Mr. Fosdyke seemingly enjoying the lovely sea view, the bright sun, and friendly talk, a great deal too thoroughly to have much intention of upbraiding them for having lingered on their road. At a little distance from them, within sight but out of hearing, were the three young people who had accompanied them. Mr. Stonehurst appeared to be extracting a mingled amusement from different sources of entertainment. He was, on the one hand, parrying with considerable ingenuity Miss Louisa Riley's attempts to beguile the time with a little incipient flirtation; and,

on the other, exciting many vivid blushes and some painful confusion in pretty Grace Tremble, by a running fire of mixed badinage and gallantry, while he expended his superabundant energies in attempting to pitch pebbles into the sea, which was just sufficiently near to make him hope that each successive endeavour would render him successful. Nevertheless, all these several occupations were thrown aside with great alacrity as soon as their expected recruits came in sight.

“Welcome, fair ladies!” exclaimed he, as he started to his feet; “you know not the alarm your tardy arrival has occasioned. Miss Riley has wept in silence as her lively imagination has brought before her no less than sixteen different dangers which might have assailed her beloved friend; and I have perceived that Miss Tremble, under a calm exterior, has experienced much anguish of mind lest you, Belcomb, had sustained some dire disaster.”

“We are all fully aware, Stonehurst, that we shall not owe you any debt of gratitude for kind fear produced in your mind by our absence,” said Sir Edward, good-naturedly, wishing to make Grace feel that he was not

noticing the bright colour that the assertion respecting her had brought into her cheeks.

“Nay,” returned Stonehurst, “I confess I have no claim to any. I soon came to the conclusion that Fosdyke could not pass Wimborn Priory without persuading you all to turn aside to rhapsodize a little among its crumbling ruins on the holy charm of by-gone days.”

“You were mistaken, then,” said Arthur, quietly. “However strong the temptation may have been, it was resisted. We halted but an instant to look at it from among the trees.”

“Let us not linger any more now,” cried Charlotte; “we must walk to yonder point, for the moment we doubt that, Anna, we have quite another view. I dare say Lady Belcomb will remain where she is, and any one that is tired can stay with her.”

But nobody pleaded guilty to anything so base as being tired at Seaborough Cove, so they all set forth together upon their walk. Sir Edward gave his arm, as though it were a matter of course, to Miss Marsden; Arthur offered his to Grace, who accepted it with an eagerness which proved to him he was right in supposing that Mr. Stonehurst’s

compliments had more frightened than gratified her. The remaining gentleman fell to Charlotte's share; and poor Louisa, who, at an unlucky moment had retired for the purpose of reducing to obedience a ringlet that had unwarrantably strayed from the place assigned it, returned to find that she alone of all the damsels was without an attendant cavalier. For a moment a deep shadow rested upon her countenance, but she knew she would not mend matters by losing her temper; so, with a little eager bound, she reached Charlotte, and seizing her affectionately by the arm, assured her of the excessive delight she felt at being able to join her. This expression of joy was not responded to by Mr. Stonehurst, but as he offered no opposition to the arrangement, they all proceeded together; and perhaps of the several divisions into which the walking-party thus fell, theirs was the one productive of least satisfaction.

Sir Edward and Anna resumed the conversation which had occupied them during the greater part of their ride, and every remark of hers served to convince him that her taste was as pure, her judgment as acute, her mind as cultivated, and her prin-

ciples as strong as he had already felt her features and figure to be beautiful. Sir Edward, on his part, exhibited a fund of natural humour and acquired information, which would have made it impossible for her to deny that he was a singularly agreeable companion, even if he had not, with the freedom from reserve, which formed one great charm of his character, ever and anon, as the conversation gave an opportunity, let drop a passing word which shewed him possessed of a reverential mind, and a passionate admiration for all that was true and excellent, which could not fail, if he gave his better qualities fair play, to lead him to become all that she would think he ought to be.

Grace Tremble has been kept in our story very much in her own favourite position—quite in the back ground. She was very young, and rather pretty, with small delicate features, and a gentle innocent expression, the charm of which was in a great measure destroyed by a little frightened look which she invariably wore in society. She was the eldest daughter of a widower, who had occupied one of the pretty small houses in Cholerton for about a couple of years. Nothing

was known very precisely as to his means of living now, or the position he had held previously. Some people thought he was a merchant, who, having made *mauvaises affaires*, had yet been enabled to secure sufficient for the wants of himself and his children; others were of opinion that he was a retired attorney, who preferred living in tranquillity upon a small income to spending a large one obtained in a manner not altogether consonant to his religious principles. Nobody could say that Mr. Tremble had himself told them that this was the case, but the general impression seemed to be that the report had originated with himself. As there was nothing in the appearance of the family, which consisted of the father, Grace, and several younger children, to promise much reward for any advances towards an acquaintanceship that might be made there, it is probable they would have been very little noticed, had it not been for the good nature of Lady Belcomb, whose eyes never rested upon a young face without feeling a wish to be instrumental in lighting it up with a smile. To effect this in the case of the prematurely-sedate-looking Grace seemed almost hopeless; but Lady Belcomb did not

despair, and finding her efforts to be kind to the little girl very well received by the father, except when she proposed that she should join a party, where there was a chance of her eyes being shocked by the sight of a card, or her ears polluted by the sound of a fiddle, she persevered in her good-natured attempt.

When Mr. Tremble came first to Choller-ton, the Rectory was occupied by an old gentleman who had held the living for upwards of fifty years, and the majority of his parishioners having grown up under his pastoral care, or, perhaps we might more correctly say, without it, were well satisfied with the state of things to which they had been accustomed all their lives. Mr. Tremble, not sharing this feeling, suffered considerably from the absence of the spirit-stirring discourses which he was wont to tell to all those who would listen to him, had been the happy means of detaching him from all vain pursuits and sinful affections. Upon one occasion, waxing more eloquent than usual, he was heard to speak of the Rector as a dumb dog; but finding his hearers did not altogether respond to this sentiment, he never repeated it. At last old Dr. Jathwell died,

and Mr. Tremble entertained a hope that he might see Chollerton pulpit filled as he could wish. He even went the length of writing a very long anonymous letter to the Bishop of the diocese, in whose gift the living was, pointing out a highly-talented young man most eminently fitted to preach the Gospel to the benighted Chollertonians. Deeply was he disturbed when he found that, reckless of the advice he had felt it his duty to offer, the living was given to Mr. Dampierre. Mr. Tremble was an acute man, and he discovered sooner than most of his parishioners that the whole tone and substance of Mr. Dampierre's sermons was diametrically opposite to what he wished to hear. He bore it for two Sundays, but the announcement, to which we have before alluded, of the Rector's intention to use the church for week-day services was more than he could bear; so he ordered his prayer-books and hassocks to be removed from the place which he had hitherto occupied in Chollerton Church, and transferred to a pew in that of a neighbouring parish, where he said his ears and those of his young family were not offended by the soul-destroying heresies which were forced upon

those who continued to expose themselves to the dangers and temptations from which he had with such vigorous conscientiousness escaped.

But to return to Grace. Her first feeling when Arthur offered her his arm was one of gratitude to him for relieving her from the fear of any further conversation with Mr. Stonehurst; but after a few moments' consideration, she thought her present companion might prove equally, if not more, distasteful to her, inasmuch as she had an idea that he was one of those dreadful Oxford men whose sole aim in life was to lead, if possible, the truly enlightened Christians from the right path, and involve them in a maze of Popish idolatry. The notion that he would certainly seize upon the favourable opportunity that now presented itself to attempt to undermine her religious principles, was the more painful to her, from feeling that it was her duty to reply to him by exposing his departure from the simplicity of the Gospel, and by a faithful witness to the truth as she held it herself. But though Grace's education had succeeded in teaching her that this was in her situation a very essential and primary duty, it had not yet

destroyed the natural diffidence of her character; and she felt as unwilling to undertake the task of instructing Mr. Arthur Fosdyke in what doctrines he ought to hold and what doctrines he ought to practise, as most other little girls not quite seventeen might be expected to do. It was therefore a very great relief to her mind when she found that Arthur soon began to talk about the delightful warmth of the sun, the beautiful tossing of the waves, and the bold outline of the cliff. By degrees all her fears of theological discussions were forgotten, and before they had reached the point mentioned by Charlotte, she was herself recounting with a very unusual degree of enjoyment the droll freaks of her little brother John, and the witty sayings of her young sister Phœbe.

The party returned to the Cove, having had walking and talking sufficient to make them all very hungry; the contents of the baskets were unpacked by a servant of Lady Belcomb's who had accompanied them in the yacht, and who was considered a most experienced hand in such matters; the most sofa-looking pieces of rock were selected as the seats of the ladies, the rougher ones were

occupied by the gentlemen ; and full justice was done to the cold lamb, chickens, salad, &c., which had been provided for them. At the conclusion of this repast, as they still retained their seats, Lady Belcomb said, with something like a sigh,

“ The last time we were all at Seaborough Cove, Charlotte, my dear Julia was with us, and you sang to me my favourite sea-song.”

“ Indeed I wish we had Julia to sing it with me now,” replied Charlotte ; “ but even in her absence I think you can have the song, if you like it. As soon as this pic-nic was settled I persuaded Anna to learn Julia’s part, without telling her how soon she was likely to be called on to perform it. You will try it, Anna, will you not ? ”

“ I will attempt it with pleasure,” said Anna, “ if Lady Belcomb wishes it ; but you must remember that it is almost new to me.”

“ Thank you very much, dear Miss Marsden,” returned Lady Belcomb, “ and thanks to you too, Charlotte, for remembering my fancy for that song. I am so used to hear it at Seaborough Cove, that our pic-nic

would appear incomplete to me without it."

"It is with my part that it begins," said Charlotte, and without further parley the two girls sang the following verses* :—

FIRST VOICE.

Oh, sister! Do you not love to see
 Those joyous waves so light and free,
 Rising and falling,
 With their silvery crests bright, cold, and clear,
 And their well-known murmur, that sounds to my ear
 Like an old friend's calling?

See how they dance in the sunbeam bright,
 Joying, as we do, to live in the light
 That round us plays.
 As they give back the tint of the azure sky,
 Do they not teach us to raise on high
 Glad songs of praise?

SECOND VOICE.

Yes! Let them send our thoughts above,
 Where only tempests cannot move
 The calm serene.
 For, see, e'en now the sunshine fades,
 And that deep gathering cloud o'ershades
 The darkening scene.

* These verses are inserted by the permission of a friend.

FIRST VOICE.

But there's hope and joy in that changing sea,
And sweet is the sound of its music to me,
As it dashes its waves !
Oh ! would I could dive to its farthest deep,
And make friendly sea-nymphs sing me to sleep
In their coral caves !

SECOND VOICE.

And bid them tell what tales of woe
Lie hid in the awful depths, below
That rolling surge.
What noble hearts have ceased to beat,
The dark green wave their winding sheet,
And the wild storm their dirge.

FIRST VOICE.

But shall not we, like these blue skies,
Shake off the drops that dim our eyes
When the dark cloud is past ?
And laugh when Nature laughs ? Since well
Does Hope's glad voice the promise tell,
That sorrows do not last.

BOTH.

Yes ! look at yon rainbow-arch above !
Bright emblem of eternal love ;
See on its radiant slope,
Though it tells of showers and watery skies,
Yet shews athwart them to our eyes,
The blessed hues of hope.

The voices of the two girls harmonized charmingly; and the effect of their song in the open air, while the advancing sea made a gently-rolling accompaniment, delighted those that heard it.

Mr. Fosdyke soon reminded them that their return would probably not be effected with the same rapidity that they had accomplished their voyage in the morning; and, in obedience to his suggestion, those belonging to the water-party bade a temporary adieu to the four equestrians, and repaired on board the yacht. Those left on the beach lingered awhile, and watched their friends till their figures became indistinct under the awning that was placed over the deck of the vessel, and they then prepared to mount the cliff to reach their horses. The ascent was effected in the same manner as they had descended in the early morning, Arthur taking charge of his sister, and Sir Edward watching over Miss Marsden; and in spite of a slight effort made by her to alter the arrangement, their homeward ride was performed in the same manner.

CHAPTER XIV.

“I HOPE you have enjoyed your first picnic, Anna,” said Charlotte, after they had dismounted; “we have had a delightful day for it.”

“I liked it extremely,” replied her friend. “I thought everybody was so agreeable.”

“I cannot quite agree with you there,” returned Charlotte. “I thought everybody more stupid than usual. Mr. Stonehurst is certainly a great bore, and Grace Tremble grows every day more of a non-entity.”

“I do not know much of Mr. Stonehurst,” replied Anna, “and I do not much fancy I should like him; but I think I could interest myself in Miss Tremble. Your brother, I observed, talked a great deal to her, and chose her as his walking companion.”

“He would make a point of doing that at any time,” observed Charlotte, “to any girl that he thought shy and not much noticed, out of pure kind feeling; but to-day he had not scope for much choice. You were engrossed by Sir Edward, and I know quite

well Arthur cannot endure Louisa, though I have never heard him say so."

"Well," returned Anna, laughing, "even if he did take Miss Tremble as a *pis aller*, I must confess that I envied her a little."

"Then you found Sir Edward a bore, I suppose," cried Charlotte. "With what wonderful philosophy you submitted to the infliction!"

"No," said Anna, still laughing, and perhaps colouring a little at the same time. "Sir Edward's conversation was not an infliction, neither did he bore me; but of two agreeable men, one may be more so than another."

"I don't think generally," said Charlotte thoughtfully, as if she were weighing some very important matter, "that Arthur is considered in society a more agreeable man than Sir Edward."

"But that's just the point, Lotte," exclaimed her cousin. "I dare say Sir Edward is the more agreeable man in society, but I do not feel that I am in society when I am talking to Arthur, and I mean I like that sort of talk best. He is so honest, so frank; and his conversation always leaves me something to think about afterwards. I cannot

think of Arthur as a common agreeable man."

"I am delighted, dearest Anna, to hear you speak of him as you do," returned Charlotte, her bright eyes for a moment dimmed by a tear. "You are good enough yourself to be able to appreciate him, which I cannot say of every one. Arthur is not a man to be known in a few weeks; but when you have watched him as I have done, and seen how wonderfully consistent his life is with his rather high-strained notions of what is right, you will love him and reverence him as I do. Much as I like Sir Edward, Anna, and glad as I am to have him back again among us, resuming his old habits of joining us at all times, I could not help wishing this morning that he had been looking at the Coloseum, or otherwise pleasantly occupied on the other side of the Alps, so that you might have heard all that Arthur said to me during our ride. And yet," added she, "it is as well that you did not; for if you had been with us, I dare say I should have said something flippant, which would have displeased him. I am never flippant to him, I think, except when somebody else is there to hear me."

“ My dear Lotte,” said Anna, “ how can you permit yourself at any time to take such a tone with him? You know how greatly it distresses him, and that it is wrong altogether.”

“ Oh, yes, I know that well enough,” returned Charlotte rather impatiently; “ but I am not used to be scolded, and I do not like it. I can bear it from Arthur, but I do not like anybody to see me taken to task even by him; and so you know that if it happens that he in his straightforward way says one is very wrong, the only way to get out of it is to raise a laugh by some little bit of half-innocent nonsense.”

“ I do not understand what you mean by half-innocent nonsense, Charlotte,” replied Anna; “ nothing that can be said is half-innocent. Every thing you say must be right, or at least harmless, or it is wrong. If you mean by half-innocent nonsense any light jesting upon sacred things, or a dangerous attempt to excite a laugh at the expense of a person who is honestly endeavouring to warn you against an error, I think nothing can be more wrong.”

“ Oh, Anna!” exclaimed Charlotte, “ how can you be so disagreeable! you take every

thing so much *au sérieux*. I don't know how we arrived at so grave a point in our conversation. I meant to have a moment's amusement in laughing at your contriving so quietly to engross Sir Edward all day; and it has ended by your giving me a regular sermon, cut and dried. I am a most unlucky girl! I never mean any harm, and only hate to be plagued, and yet I cannot for a moment keep clear of a lecture. You have now kept me such a time, I shall not have a moment to dress for dinner."

And so saying, away flew the thoughtless Charlotte.

CHAPTER XV.

RIDING, walking, and boating parties succeeded each other as the summer advanced. As Charlotte had hopefully predicted, Anna Marsden by degrees became more and more infected with the gay spirit that seemed generally to preside over Chollerton, and each week appeared to leave her at its close more happy than it had found her. She made acquaintance with nearly all her poor

neighbours in the village, and constantly visited and assisted them under the directions of Mr. Dampierre. She succeeded, too, in inducing her cousin, whose kind heart always led her to relieve any suffering that came before her, in some measure to adopt her plans, and follow her system. At one time, too, she would accompany her occasionally to the early prayers; but when Anna was just beginning to flatter herself that she was becoming more regular in her attendance, a little squib of Mr. Fosdyke's, directed against Charlotte, made her wince and fall back into her old habits.

The morning in question was a Friday, on which the young people were met by Mr. Fosdyke at the hall-door, as they entered the house on their return from the church. Charlotte slipped hurriedly by, and ran up stairs without waiting to have the "Good morning, papa," acknowledged. Had she not put herself in such a fuss, it is likely that her father would have made no remark upon seeing her there; but her heightened colour and hasty escape attracted his attention, and they were no sooner seated at the breakfast-table than he said,

"I perceive, Lotte, our excellent divine

elect has only made a half convert of you. He has talked you into dancing attendance upon Mr. Dampierre at sun-dawn, but he has not yet drilled you into standing still to be laughed at in his own philosophical style. Your brisk flight this morning was, I assure you, quite consolatory to me. It inspired me with a hope that in your heart you feel the absurdity of your new habit."

"Nay, father," began Arthur in an eager tone, which showed Anna that he meant to do for his sister what he had so decidedly refused to do for her in a similar trouble. But Charlotte did not wait for any assistance from him.

"Indeed, papa," replied she blushing and trying to laugh, "I have made no habit. It was a lovely morning, and I was going into the garden just as I met Anna, and I thought I might as well enjoy a little chat walking with her to church as ramble in the garden by myself."

"That was most inconsiderate of you, Charlotte," returned her father. "Possibly you deprived your cousin of half the edification she might have derived from the habit she so unremittingly practises, by thrusting upon her your worldly chatter, instead of

allowing her to receive the exhortations with which I have no doubt Arthur favours her during their tête à tête returns from church. How can you tell," continued he, pointing to his son, whose breakfast, consisting of a cup of tea and a piece of bread, he had often before alluded to on a similar occasion, "how can you tell but that a little more of his eloquence might induce Anna to make such abstemious meals as we are now witnessing?"

Charlotte cast a look at Anna across the table, and saw her with a flushed cheek immediately help herself in a manner which she knew to be unusual with her on a fast day, and noticed that what she thus placed on her plate remained untouched. Charlotte blushed for her friend, and felt that the action was unworthy of her; but it did not at the moment occur to her that, in framing the excuse she had just given for going to church, she had been herself guilty of precisely the same fault she was then condemning in another. Arthur did not reply to his father's observation, and the breakfast was concluded without much further attempt at conversation.

Anna did not need the stern look of dis-

approval which rested on Arthur's countenance as he held open the door of the breakfast room for them as they passed, to tell her that he had noticed the little action we have mentioned. She wished he would follow them to the boudoir and speak to her on the subject, even though more severely than he had ever yet spoken to her. She almost resolved to ask him to join them, but her courage failed her, and she could only whisper to Charlotte,

“Ask him to come.”

“Come up stairs for five minutes, Arthur,” said his sister, immediately; “I really will not keep you longer,”

“I do not wish to waste five minutes now, Charlotte,” replied he, gravely; “and as I do not think I should be of any service to either of you, joining you would be waste of time.”

Poor Anna felt as if he had told her that to offer her advice, or to warn her against her besetting weakness, was an useless exertion, and that in future he would take no further heed of her. Her eyes filled with tears, and dropping Charlotte's arm, she passed on to her own bedroom, and began to reflect on what had taken place. Hers

was not a mind that found relief in seeking and discovering excuses for having acted wrongly; nor did the recollection of Charlotte's speech ever occur to her to comfort her by the idea that at any rate she was not worse than other people. Her own conscience condemned her; and the thought that Arthur, who, though straightforward and uncompromising in all matters of principle, had always appeared to be kind and gentle towards all faults that were repented of; that he should blame her so strongly as to refuse to speak to her, even when she begged him to do so, for she felt sure that he was aware Charlotte only uttered her request, caused her acute pain. How strongly did she then acknowledge the truth of what he had once said to her, that with no higher aim than to avoid annoyance, it was inexpedient to play the coward in order to escape the sight of a sneer or a sting.

The day passed without Anna's having an opportunity of addressing a word to Arthur except across the dinner-table; but as it was his habit on a fast-day to remain principally in his own room, she could not tell if this impossibility arose from any determined avoidance of herself individually.

The next morning Charlotte was still in bed when Anna knocked at her door before going down stairs, and it was with a palpitating heart that she found herself in a position to receive the private exhortation of which Mr. Fosdyke had spoken. All the previous day Anna had sought for the opportunity which now presented itself to her, but now it seemed as if she could not benefit by it. Short as was the time in which she had to speak, and much as she wished to say and hear, she allowed some minutes to pass without giving vent to a word.

Apparently their walk would have been made in total silence had not Arthur first addressed her.

“I told you, Anna, some weeks ago,” said he, “that I should soon expect to hear from you the result of the consideration you promised to give to a certain rule I advised you to follow. Will you tell me now if you have ever thought of following it?”

Anna remained silent.

“I have no right to speak to you, Anna,” continued he, gently, “in the tone of a brother but what you have granted me. If you find my doing so to be disagreeable, you can withdraw the permission you gave me;

but until it is withdrawn, I cannot, in accordance with what I think right, refrain from speaking with all frankness to you."

"I was afraid," replied Anna, "that you thought me too weak and inconsistent to feel it worth your while to waste any further advice upon me. You know you almost said so yesterday."

"I certainly thought yesterday morning," returned her companion, "that it would be waste of time to point out either to you or to Charlotte that you had both acted wrongly. My sister, I knew, was too much annoyed at the moment to have listened in a useful mood to any suggestion of mine; and I thought, Anna, that you were likely to feel your own inconsistency and folly—to give it no harsher name—too acutely to render it necessary for me to point them out to you. Moreover, I wished to see if your own sense of right and regret at having indulged a culpable weakness were strong enough to urge you to give any mark of repentance. I fear this has not been the case. You must tell me if I have done you wrong in so thinking."

Anna was apparently in no very talking mood, for again his words remained unanswered.

"I think, Anna," resumed he, after an interval of silence, "that you must mention to my father that you make a habit of observing the rule of fasting or abstinence imposed by the Church."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Anna; "I cannot, indeed."

"Why did you wish for my advice," asked Arthur, "if you were determined not to follow the only line of conduct you must have known I could recommend?"

"I wished to speak to you about it," returned she, "because I could not feel quite happy while you were blaming me, and because I hoped you would acknowledge that there would be a degree of impertinence, of presumption in my forcing my opinions upon Mr. Fosdyke, when I know them to be in opposition to his own."

"I cannot think," returned Arthur, "that you can be fairly accused of presumption in attempting simply to obey, or in confessing that you obey, an authority that is placed over you. Your argument might lead you to the neglect of any or every duty that others to whom you owe respect do not perform. Rather than see you, Anna, reconcile yourself to such an action as I noticed in

you yesterday," continued he, earnestly, "I would have you cease to attempt to obey the Church's injunctions to fast. If, after giving your best attention to the subject, you cannot see clearly whether it is your duty simply and openly to follow the rules of the Church, or to yield before the ridicule—not the commands, remember—of your guardian, apply for counsel to one who is authorized to guide you. Ask Mr. Dampierre's advice with the determination to submit to it; but do not, I implore you, let any confusion of ideas lead you to believe you can be right in acting a lie—forgive the term—as you did yesterday."

"Indeed, Arthur," returned she, in a tone of earnest contrition, "I do not think I was right; I am sure I was very wrong. Your phrase, though a painful one, is not too strong. I did act a lie, and I am sincerely, deeply sorry for it."

"I believe you, Anna," answered he, pausing a moment as he laid his hand upon the gate through which they were about to pass into the garden, "and therefore I am convinced you will not permit a dread of exposing yourself to what is disagreeable interfere to prevent you from announcing to

my father the fact that you have improperly endeavoured to conceal from him. If you do not do so I shall believe that your view of some comparative duties differs from mine; and however much I may regret that we do not think alike, I shall not presume to blame you for it."

Anna would have been very thankful to have had leisure for half an hour's quiet thought before joining the party at the breakfast-table, but that was impossible; and she was obliged to defer till another opportunity the task of considering the subject, which, nevertheless, she could not drive from her mind.

At first she sat silent and abstracted, fearing that Arthur was expecting each moment that she would allude to the subject they had been discussing. But he, on the contrary, seemed to have dismissed it from his mind, and talked to each individual at table in a manner even more animated than usual. He felt, as he had said, fully convinced that Anna, whose uprightness and truth he greatly admired and valued, really deplored her momentary departure from right, and that her regret would lead her to a conscientious examination of her duty, and a more

strict attempt to perform it. Knowing, too, that this inquiry would be accompanied by humble and sincere prayer to be guided into the right path, and for strength to keep in it, he could not entertain any fears on her account.

Anna felt too little at ease to join Charlotte in her usual morning occupations, and telling her that she would be with her in a couple of hours, she retired to her own room, and prepared calmly to consider the difficulty in which she found herself. A moment's thought convinced her that Arthur was right in saying that of any plan she might pursue, the worst was to attempt to fulfil a duty so secretly as to be driven to practical falsehood to conceal it.

Even here, in the solitude of her own chamber, her cheeks tingled with a deep sense of shame as she thought of the well-deserved epithet he had applied to her conduct. She, whose earnest aim was to keep her lips unsullied by the slightest departure from the truth, had indeed acted a lie. How could she atone for it: how best prevent the chance of being again betrayed into the same fault? For a moment she thought of following Arthur's suggestion to apply for counsel

to Mr. Dampierre, as to him who was set over her as her guide and pastor; but the conviction that such an application, however kindly received, would be most unusual, made her shrink from such a course. For a moment her mind reverted to the reverend old man under whose eye she had been brought up, and to whose careful instruction she owed the religious knowledge and principles which had comforted and sustained her through many difficulties, worse than the one which now troubled her, and wished that she was still under his pastoral care; but she checked the thought, knowing that it was her duty to act as nearly right as she could in the circumstances in which Providence had placed her, and not to wish for advantages which she ought to believe were not desirable for her, since God had not been pleased to bestow them on her.

The result of her deliberations was a determination as simply and respectfully as she could to tell her guardian that she wished, if he did not object to such a practice, to observe the injunctions for fasting given in our Prayer-book, as she had been taught to consider obedience to the rules of the Church a duty binding on her, and to endure as quietly

and patiently as possible any ridicule he might choose to throw upon her, but only to desist from it in case he forbade her to continue it. Having thus made up her mind, she thought the sooner her little explanation was effected the better; so screwing her courage to the sticking place, she left her room, and sought the library.

“Mr. Fosdyke,” began she with rather a hesitating voice, as she obeyed his invitation to come in, “will you, if not too much engaged, allow me five minutes conversation with you?”

“Willingly, my dear child,” replied he; “only do not look as if you were afraid of me.”

“I should be very ungrateful,” said Anna, endeavouring to smile, “if I were really afraid of you, after you have been so kind to me; but I believe, I am afraid you will think me very silly for what I am going to say. You remember what you said yesterday morning about Arthur’s persuading me to think it right to fast; I ought to have told you then, that before I ever saw Arthur I had been taught by one whose instructions I am sure, if you knew him, you would think I ought to remember with gratitude,

that I ought to obey the Church's injunction to fast whenever some higher duty did not interfere. Having been so taught, you will not blame me for endeavouring to do so. I believe," added she, "that obedience to you, who have so kindly consented to hold a father's place to me, is a higher duty; therefore, if you bid me, I shall relinquish the practice at once."

It was evident to Mr. Fosdyke that these words had cost Anna a great effort, and he was too kind-hearted a man not to wish to relieve her from what he saw was a painful position; and in truth, though he could not always resist the temptation to ridicule, in his son, observances, the spirit of which he did not understand, and consequently could not value, yet he felt considerable respect for any opinions which he could be induced to believe were held sincerely. That this was the case with Anna Marsden he felt convinced; and it was therefore in a very kind tone, free from the least approach to banter, that he replied,

"No, my dear child, do not fancy that I shall ever exercise my authority over you to force you to give up anything you think right that is really harmless in itself. If

you have been educated in such opinions, I shall have no wish to shape them; and you must not think I am blaming you, or those from whom you received such impressions, if I caution you against allowing them to take such strong hold of your imagination as to exclude other ideas which naturally, I am sure, would always belong to you. I mean that I should be sorry, Anna, to see you draw attention to yourself in society by any unnecessary strictness. Hold your opinions, and act upon them modestly; and though I may not agree with you, I shall never regard them otherwise than with respect. You understand, my dear, I do not say this from having observed in you any departure from what I think so essential in a person of your age and sex, but because I have seen so many instances in which extreme notions of religious duty have led to the fault I have mentioned."

It occurred to Anna that this was very likely to be the case where the extreme notions were of an unauthorized nature, the crude suggestions of a heated brain and an uneasy conscience; but that there was slight danger of it in an humble desire to live in submissive obedience to all due authority.

She made, however, no remark to this effect, but, on the contrary, thanked her guardian for the kind manner in which he had received her little explanation, and promised to remember his advice, and to listen to any further hint that he might give, if on any future occasion she seemed to have forgotten it. With a lightened heart she ran up stairs to join Charlotte, again wondering that she should have expected to find it so very difficult to do what was simply right.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARLOTTE FOSDYKE had not forgotten her cousin's desire to pay a visit to Winborn Priory; but though it was apparently a scheme of such easy accomplishment, some weeks had been suffered to elapse without its having been effected. Sir Edward Belcomb, who still bore in mind that he was to accompany them, was as desirous as the two girls of inducing Arthur to join them, but it became every day more difficult to persuade him that he had time to bestow on

the frequent little expeditions that they were constantly planning. At last, finding they were resolved not to go without him, he consented to be of the party, and a day for it was fixed.

On the morning previous to the one they had named, while Charlotte and Anna were calling at Chollerton Hall, Lady Belcomb said,

“Mrs. Dampierre has just been here, Charlotte, and she tells me she has never seen the new church at Sanderton, and that having no carriage she cannot well get so far, so I have offered to drive her there to-morrow. Will you and Anna go with us?”

“To-morrow,” replied Charlotte, “we have engaged to ride to Winborn Priory. Sir Edward is to go with us. Arthur is so difficult to catch now, that I am afraid if we let him escape to-morrow, we may not find it easy to secure him again quickly.”

“You must not let me interfere with any arrangements already made,” said Lady Belcomb; “but as we shall not want to go very early, do you not think you can ride on to Sanderton after you have seen the Priory, and join us there? We shall not be there before half-past four.”

“That can be easily managed, dear Lady Belcomb,” replied Charlotte. “A new church Anna always thinks worth seeing; and this, I have been told, is really in exquisite taste.—Will you be kind enough,” added she, as they rose to take leave, “to tell Sir Edward that he must be sure to be with us not later than two o’clock to-morrow.”

“Suppose you were to allow me to invite myself to luncheon,” said Sir Edward, at that moment entering the room; “and as I find you are going, if you will let me give you each an arm, on your road home you can explain to me why such extra punctuality is to be the order of the day to-morrow.”

Sir Edward was delighted with the extended plan, as indeed he would be at any arrangement that enabled him to spend an additional hour by the side of Anna Marsden. Very gently, very pleasantly, and now very perceptibly to himself, Sir Edward was falling desperately in love with her. It was the first time such a thing had occurred to him, and he found the process singularly agreeable.

As yet all had gone smoothly with him. Lady Belcomb always seemed to hear with

pleasure any proposal which was to throw him into the society of the inmates of the Lodge; Mr. and Mrs. Fosdyke always welcomed him with an appearance of pleasure; Charlotte's look of gaiety never varied as she witnessed, as he supposed, his evident devotion to her friend; Arthur, though he had of late much separated himself from them, ever warmly greeted him when he found him in his now almost constant attendance upon the young ladies. And Anna herself began to receive him with exactly that look of half pleasure, half embarrassment, which lovers best like to discover.

Sir Edward's proposal to luncheon at the Lodge had been acceded to, and they were mounted and *en route* by the moment Charlotte mentioned. It was the first time Arthur had ridden with them since their pic-nic to Seaborough Cove, but now, as in traversing the same road, they fell into the same division, Anna felt no regret at having Sir Edward for her companion instead of her cousin.

It cannot be denied that, under ordinary circumstances, Arthur Fosdyke would have been infinitely more calculated to have interested Anna's feelings than Sir Edward Belcomb; and Charlotte, who possessed

considerable quickness of perception in matters of character, soon perceived how exactly they were formed to attract each other: her persuasion of this, increased perhaps by her wish that it might prove so, was so strong, that she allowed nothing that passed daily before her eyes to shake her conviction that they were destined for each other. Anna, on the contrary, though at first thinking him singularly agreeable, and then growing by degrees highly to esteem him, and accustoming herself to watch for any mark of his approbation, and to dread his slightest censure, soon perceived that much as he might like or admire her, it was impossible for him to do more. She could understand, though the idea was above the grasp of Charlotte's mind, that he was too earnestly and deeply absorbed in the contemplation of the sacred duties to which he was preparing to devote himself, to allow any earthly passion to take possession of him. The feeling, therefore, with which she daily more and more regarded him, was one of reverence, which, though too consonant to the tone of her mind to be painful to her, was pleasantly relieved by the gay, agreeable, and by degrees fascinating intercourse she had with Sir Edward.

Till her arrival at Choller顿, Anna had led so retired a life, that she had had no opportunity of inspiring either admiration or regard, though eminently calculated to do so when she was known. Even from her mother, with whom she had almost exclusively lived, she had rarely met with other than the coldest, and frequently with harsh, treatment; and the old clergyman, whose counsels she seemed to remember with so much affectionate gratitude, had been very desirous of informing her mind upon religious subjects, and teaching her to act upon the principles with which he inspired her, without making her find a painful contrast between the gentle indulgence with which he felt inclined to treat her and the conduct she had to submit to from her mother. To find herself, therefore, the object of so much warm and admiring regard, as she could not but clearly perceive in Sir Edward, was a pleasure as novel as it was delightful; and we must not be surprised if she soon learnt to return his affection with a more entire and simple devotion of heart than it might have been thought likely his not very marked character was capable of inspiring in such a person as herself.

But to return from this digression to the riding party. Not being pressed for time they continued their route at a pace which permitted them the full enjoyment of conversation; but whether by accident or design, on the broad road, as well as in passing along the narrow pathway through the Dean, they rode in divisions of two and two.

For the first time in her life, perhaps, Charlotte was dissatisfied with her brother as her companion. Was it that she would have preferred to have occupied her cousin's place, or was Arthur in truth less agreeable than usual? This he certainly was. At first mounting he seemed inclined, having consented for a few hours to cast aside his graver thoughts and occupations, to enjoy to the utmost the short holiday he was permitting himself; but soon after their party had arranged itself, in the manner already mentioned, by what or whose management was not apparent, his gaiety passed away, and he became too much engrossed by his own meditations to be able successfully to endeavour to rouse Charlotte from a rather unusual fit of silence which had fallen upon her. After a few trifling attempts on either side at conversation, for which they

seemed equally disinclined, they ceased to make the unnecessary effort to render themselves agreeable, and rode on side by side without speaking till they reached the ruins.

Upon rejoining Anna and Sir Edward, Arthur felt it necessary to be more like himself; and forcibly driving from his mind the thoughts that oppressed him, he undertook to lead them through the ruins, with every portion of which he had been acquainted from his childhood, and to point out to Anna the different departments of the building.

“ This was the Chapel,” said he, reverently removing his hat, in which action Sir Edward imitated him, as he came within the consecrated precincts. Here they remained some moments, but no further word was spoken among them; those that could not themselves understand that the place that had been once hallowed by being dedicated to Worship and Prayer, could never again, however desecrated, become common ground, respected the feeling that they knew some of their party so deeply and sincerely entertained.

“ Tell me, Arthur,” said Sir Edward, after they had left the ruined chapel, and had seated themselves on a fallen tree, at a

little distance, from which they had a lovely view of the still beautiful ruin, "tell me what is the pleasure that you find among these ruins. You do not rejoice in these evidences of the rapacity and sacrilege of those that have gone before us. A religious establishment abolished, and consecrated ground profaned, cannot be a gratifying sight to you, even if their ruined walls and delicate ivy-covered trellis-work do form a picturesque object for your eye."

"My satisfaction here," replied Arthur, "is undoubtedly tinged with a feeling of deep sorrow for the sins of our forefathers, which is not lightened by the hope that their descendants, in the present day at least, will make any attempt to restore what they destroyed. And till we do endeavour again to dedicate to sacred purposes what they sacrilegiously perverted to their own use, I cannot but fear that the sins of our fathers will be visited upon their children."

"You tell us now, Arthur," said his sister, "why this spot puts painful ideas into your head, but you have not answered Sir Edward's question, which was, from what you derive the pleasure you find here?"

"It was not intentionally that I passed by

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his question," returned Arthur, "but the feeling of pain predominating at the moment, I naturally dwelt upon the thought that occasioned it. I am afraid you will think me indulging in some poetical or unreal sentiment, Belcomb, if I say that there seems to hang about these old walls a spirit of devotion and abstraction from worldly hopes and fears that calms and pleases me. Yet surely it is soothing to be able to withdraw ourselves from the petty struggles, the small desires, the vehement regrets that surround us, and in which we too often share, and by an effort of imagination which the tranquil influences of this place cannot but aid, to live in past times, and fancy that we are joining our prayers to those which were once offered up almost unceasingly from a place like this."

"Nay, Fosdyke," observed Sir Edward, "is not what you are now saying somewhat of a contradiction to the belief which I have heard you so strenuously assert, that every man has his appointed work in this life, which no one can, without sin, relinquish, even though he passes his existence in enjoyments the most innocent—such, for instance, as in poetical dreamings of bygone days."

“ Undoubtedly,” replied Arthur ; “ a life, or even any considerable portion of a life, passed in abstracted reveries or religious dreamings cannot be innocent ; but what may be enervating and injurious to the system, if taken in great quantities, may calm and even elevate us if partaken of sparingly. But it is not only of the past that I think when I look upon such a scene as this. The thought of the present and of the future are still more vividly upon my mind. I think of our overgrown parishes—of our large towns daily more and more relapsing into heathenism ; I think of the impossibility, humanly speaking, of counteracting the fearful evils which surround us, and which threaten our social system—of the total and avowed inadequacy of the clergy to perform the work before them ; and in spite of the renewed vigour that has lately developed itself in the Church among the laity as well as in their spiritual guides, their still increasing inadequacy, and then the sight of such a building as this whose ruins we are contemplating, makes me ask myself if a system in some degree analogous to the monastic one might not help us in our need.”

“ But do you not fear,” asked Sir Edward,

“that were we to restore the fallen monasteries, or to found new ones, we should find, as our ancestors did, that the evils belonging to the system counterbalanced the advantages?”

“No,” replied Fosdyke, “I do not; for I think in this, as in all other systems which must be arranged by man, we should benefit by the experience we have had.”

“Then you think, Arthur,” said Anna, “that there was much that needed reform when our religious houses were destroyed—that many abuses had crept in?”

“Undoubtedly,” returned Arthur; “but besides that, there were some regulations belonging to these establishments which could scarcely be called abuses—which, with our present experience, having seen how it worked, we could do better than imitate. All vows, for instance, might be dispensed with, except, perhaps, an engagement to obedience, to be binding as long as the individual remained a member of the society.”

“And you would wish, I conceive from what I know of your opinions on that ground,” said Sir Edward, “that your monks, or whatever you would choose to

call them, for monks would not be a proper term, should lead a life of more active exertion than we have any reason to suppose the last inmates of these ruins did."

"My monks," returned Arthur, "should lead a life of very constant, and at times of severe exertion. Remember," continued he, smiling, "that not possessing the power to create such an establishment as I could wish to see, it has not been incumbent on me to arrange my ideas very systematically. If my notions seem rather crude and undigested, you must forgive me on the score that you have drawn them out, and that I did not offer to put them before you of my own accord."

"Ah! never mind your ideas being crude, Arthur," cried Charlotte. "I am sure we shall all like to hear how you would arrange your new model monastery. I suppose you would be the abbot or prior of it yourself."

"There you are wrong, Charlotte," returned her brother; "but I would have my monastery—though I do not think that is the name I would give it—in, or rather just out of a great town, which would be the field of the spiritual labours of those of the society who were in holy orders; and I should like

to have the establishment numerous enough to permit the town to be amply, really amply—not according to the make-shift notions of the present day,—but really amply supplied with spiritual teachers—the daily service performed in as many churches as the town possessed, not by one only priest in each who could be spared from other pressing duties, but, with all due reverence, with the whole of its clergy at the time officiating in the town in attendance—the rich as well as the poor individually known to those set over them, and receiving private admonition from them, as well as public instruction—the schools, male and female, and all the charitable societies, subscriptions, and district visitings, all under the efficient control of these semi-monastic men, who themselves should be subject to the incumbent under whom they acted, in fact, as so many curates.. But as such a life of exertion as I am supposing theirs to be would be good neither for the soul nor body, if kept up without leisure for study and meditation, and necessary repose, I should like them to undertake it in turns, and that there should be a sufficient number, for one set to be ministering in the town while others were

engaged in carrying on constantly the Church service in their own chapel—pursuing their own studies, and superintending those of a certain number of young men who might be admitted to reside there for a limited time previously to their being ordained."

"I suppose," said Sir Edward, "you would have the whole body reside under the roof, as well those whose occupations were to be without the walls as the others."

"Of course," returned Arthur, "and they would all live in common under a superior whose rule they were bound to obey, but without any vows binding them to remain members of the society. Of course such a body must consist of single men, and probably they would be earnest devoted men, as the only desire they could expect to gratify in such a life would be that of doing good to their fellow-creatures, and of labouring for the glory of God. No love of ease, which is stronger in some men than any inclination to actual vice, would be gratified, as all in their turn would have much laborious duty to perform; no love of power, as they themselves would be under strict rule, and exercise from day to day a delegated authority; no love of luxury, as their table,

and all the appointments of the house, should be of the simplest description."

"But where can you find men who would submit to a life of so much privation and of so little reward?" asked Charlotte.

"Nay, Charlotte, you forget," returned her brother, "though such a life would be one of privation, yet, if undertaken in the only spirit in which I think it could be undertaken, it could not but meet with an exceeding great reward. No sacrifice made for Christ's sake is without its reward. Why should you fear that the Spirit of Faith is dead in the world, and that men cannot now be found willing to leave father or mother, wife, children, and lands for the sake of Christ and of His Gospel, that they may receive hereafter the gift of eternal life, and hear addressed to them the sound of those blessed words, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

Arthur rose from his seat apparently too much impressed with the thoughts his own words had brought before him to continue the conversation. He walked towards the Priory, and his figure was soon concealed among the ruins. His companions, feeling he wished to be alone, forbore to follow him.

They retained their seats, and he returned to them before any one had ventured to break the reverie which had fallen upon them. Sir Edward then reminded them that they had an appointment to keep with Lady Belcomb ; and mounting their horses which had been left in charge of a servant who accompanied them, they rode on towards Sanderton, a village which lay a few miles inland from the coast, where a new church had lately been built, which, though small, was considered as almost a model of what a country place of worship should be. Their cavalcade met and joined Lady Belcomb's carriage in time for them to approach the church together. Arthur left them for a few moments standing beneath the trees in the churchyard, while he went to seek the sexton and the keys. On his return from an unsuccessful search, he found that the man, having seen the carriage drive towards the church, and divining the object that brought them there, had already joined them with the keys, and admitted them to the sacred building.

The altar, covered by a rich crimson altar-cloth, with the holy emblem of our religion embroidered in gold upon it, was raised by

a few steps above the floor of the church, and unobscured from the eye of the worshipper by any intervening object. On one side stood an unobtrusive carved reading-desk, and on the other a pulpit nearly similar to it: open seats, with accommodation for kneeling, exhibiting no painful distinction in the preparation made for the rich and poor of Christ's flock, filled the body of the church, with the exception of an open space round the font at the entrance. No galleries—that unsightly modern device for reme-dying cheaply the evil of the want of church accommodation—defaced the little building. No organ-loft even appeared; for here the only sounds that were raised in praise of the Creator came from the mouths of His creatures. A softened light was shed upon the interior from the windows, which were all of coloured glass from the hand of Wailes; the eastern window representing our Saviour on the cross, and the side windows, six on either side, bearing on them the figures of the twelve Holy Apostles. All was peaceful, all subdued, and seeming to breathe the spirit of religion.

Lady Belcomb and her party had been for some few minutes within the church,

when Arthur joined them. He entered by a side door, and Anna perceived him immediately approach the altar rail, and kneeling down, remain for a few moments in silent prayer. As her eye fell on the little font, and passing up the nave, finally rested upon the altar, she longed to kneel by his side, and thank God for having established His Church in holiness and purity through their country, and for His inestimable mercy in having made her from infancy a member of it by baptism, in providing for her constant instruction by means of His ministers, and in permitting her to partake of the body and blood of His most blessed Son, so that to her life's end she might be continued in the state of grace to which she had been admitted at its commencement. What was it that held her back? She was still asking herself the question when she found, that, the curiosity of the party being satisfied, they were preparing to leave the sacred edifice. Arthur joined her, and gave her his arm as soon as they had passed the door; and as she took it she felt a tear, which she would have given much to suppress, rest upon her cheek.

After a few moments' silence he said,
"I prayed, Anna, that you might have

sufficient strength and faith given you to make you fear God more, and man less."

How could he so truly have understood her feelings? She longed to ask him this, to confess to him her weakness, to thank him for having prayed for her when she had not dared to do it for herself; but her tears now flowed fast, and no word passed her lips. They walked on in silence. Sir Edward had turned to look for her as they left the church, but seeing that his friend had for once forestalled him, he reluctantly offered his arm to Mrs. Dampierre, and led her back to his mother's carriage; but this duty was accomplished, and Lady Belcomb placed by her side, in time to allow him to station himself close to Anna's horse before she could reach it: not without an effort could he resign to another the pleasure of assisting her to mount. Arthur shewed no inclination to dispute it with him; he contented himself with holding her whip while she lightly jumped into the saddle, and then placed it in her hand without pronouncing a word. In an instant Sir Edward was mounted and by her side, assiduous, agreeable, devoted as ever; but she could not at that moment enjoy his animated conversa-

tion as she had done before. Her silence and abstraction were too marked to be unnoticed by him. He longed to ask what had passed in her short interview with Arthur to produce such a change; but he could find no opening for such a question, and he reached the Lodge too puzzled and discouraged to feel inclined to accept Mr. Fosdyke's cordial invitation to remain and dine with them, instead of returning to the Hall.

CHAPTER XVII.

EVEN at Chollerton, where every thing of late had appeared to wear so unchangeably bright an aspect, even there clouds would occasionally appear in the horizon; and of the four young people who had all started in a gay and happy humour upon their late excursion, none returned without a somewhat heavier heart than they carried with them. Charlotte for the first time began to be dissatisfied with the conduct of her old friend and playfellow. She had always had

the satisfaction of believing herself perfectly fancy-free; and now, though acknowledging that she did not quite like to see Sir Edward so entirely engrossed with her cousin, she could not bring herself to admit that her distaste to the spectacle arose from a wish to receive his attention herself. She rather persuaded herself that her objection was produced by feeling that if he really did attach himself to Anna, and succeed in winning her affections, there was an end to all her hopes with respect to Arthur; and, on the other hand, if Anna, as she almost believed to be the case, was prepared to return the regard which she could not but think her brother entertained for her, then this ill-judged fancy of Sir Edward's, if it really existed, would turn him into a rejected lover and a forbidden guest, instead of his remaining the useful, agreeable, every-way delightful friend he was now. Again, she thought, how was it possible that Sir Edward, if he wished to gain a woman's heart, could fail? That Arthur was kind-hearted, sweet-tempered, good-looking, intelligent, well-informed, well-born, well-bred, and sincerely conscientious and high-principled, no one more fully admitted than Charlotte;

but still, with all a sister's affection for him, she could not think he could successfully compete with Sir Edward Belcomb.

"But after all," said she to herself, endeavouring to think no more on the subject, "why should I torment myself about an evil that may never occur? Sir Edward must see the great similarity of their opinions and tastes mark Anna and Arthur for each other; and I am sure he is too sensible a person to mar any plot so charming as the one I have set my heart on in the disposal of them."

And Arthur: how had their lovely ride been productive of pain to him? It had, of deeper and acuter pain than was felt by any other of the party. He was too much in the habit of examining his own heart to wish or to be able to deceive himself after his sister's manner. Hitherto he had fancied that the regard he entertained for Anna Marsden was that of a brother for a young sister, over whom he was bound to watch. Their intercourse had been of a nature most likely to blind him to the state of his own feelings, and therefore more than usually dangerous to a man actuated by his views. The similarity of their religious opinions, and the need she felt of some one to guide

and advise her in her new position, made her eagerly turn to him for support in any doubt or difficulty; and we have seen with what frankness and freedom he encouraged or reproved her. This species of intimacy once established between them, he could not fail to become acquainted with her character and disposition with all its charms, as well as with its weaknesses; but not until this day, not till he felt a pang, such as for a moment he did not comprehend, at seeing his friend gently, and as a matter of course, put him on one side, while he approached Anna to assist her to mount her horse; not till Arthur noticed the slight blush and the half-raised eye of Anna as she accepted his services, was he conscious of feeling anything of love for her. Deep and acute was the pain he felt as his heart thus discovered itself to him. It was not the pain of unrequited love, it was not jealousy at perceiving his friend preferred before him; it was sincere and sharp contrition for having permitted an earthly affection to find entrance into his heart, which he had conceived was too exclusively devoted to God and to His service to have admitted a lower feeling. He thought, as he rode home silently and

apart, of the caution his mother but a few weeks since had given him; he thought of the answer he had then made her, of the confidence with which he had assured her that the preparation he was making for his sacred office occupied him too entirely to leave him room to feel the weakness to which he now perceived he had yielded. With deep and bitter regret he found that, unconscious of his danger, he had trusted to his own strength of purpose; he had relied on his own earnest desire to devote himself to the service of his Maker; and that he had signally failed!

He had no sooner reached the solitude of his room, than on his knees before God he confessed his presumptuous trust in his own power of resisting temptation; he acknowledged that the anguish he might feel in subduing this ill-advised passion was a fitting punishment upon him for having suffered it to share the heart which he had solemnly devoted to God; he supplicated for strength to extinguish it, and earnestly sought for pardon for having entertained it.

He was equally unable and unwilling to join the family at the dinner-table; and beg-

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ging them to excuse his non-appearance, he spent the remainder of the day in his room. The long hours of the evening and night were almost entirely passed by him on his knees in earnest prayer and repeated confession. These hours of prayer and repentance accomplished their usual work; and when daylight began to dawn, Arthur threw himself on his bed, and being sure that the pardon for the past and the strength for the future which he had implored would neither of them be refused to him, he slept peacefully and quietly till his usual hour of rising to attend the morning service. With renewed contrition he publicly joined in the confession of sin which our Church puts into the mouth of Her children, and felt such comfort and solace in receiving absolution from one to whom Christ had given power and commandment to declare and pronounce it, as those only can experience who truly repent.

He did not yet feel prepared to meet Anna alone, and therefore parted from her at the gate of the churchyard, begging her to tell his mother that he was going to walk on to the Hall, and breakfast with his friends there. This had been a very usual

practice with him in bygone days, but he had never done so since Anna had been with them. It was the first time she had returned from church without him, and she missed his earnest meaning voice, his gay bright smile, or his serious friendly reproof, when he saw she needed it; but the recollection of Sir Edward, and the constrained doubtful look with which he had parted from her the evening before, soon filled her mind, and drove all other thoughts away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE sight of Arthur at the breakfast-table at Chollerton Hall was now an unwonted and unexpected pleasure; but it did not suffice to drive from Sir Edward's mind a resolution to which the meditation of some wakeful hours during the night had brought him. He knew enough of Miss Marsden's usual morning habits to render him aware that the best chance he had of securing a few moments' uninterrupted conversation with her was to join her in one of her fre-

quent morning expeditions through the village, or rather to fall in with her before she left Mr. Fosdyke's grounds, and induce her to devote to him the time she generally bestowed upon some of her poorer neighbours. Excusing himself, therefore, from remaining with his mother and his guest, he was soon stationed in most lover-like anxiety, where he could watch two exits by which Anna might pass into the village. His impatience had hurried him to the spot early enough to cost him rather a tedious hour's lounge, but at last he was rewarded by perceiving her through the trees of the avenue, and unaccompanied by any one. In a moment he was by her side, and with some visible trepidation asking her to grant him the interview for which he had been hoping. After a moment's hesitation, Anna, without reply, turned from the carriage drive where she was walking, down a narrow, shady path, which Sir Edward well knew would, in a few yards, lead them to a sheltered arbour where they were not very likely to be interrupted at that early hour.

Here, in words far different from all those which, through the long night and weary morning, he had resolved to use, he told

Anna of his love. He spoke with fervour, even with eloquence, and Anna listened with silent pleasure ; but though giving him no word in reply, she allowed him to take and retain her hand while he poured forth his hopes, his fears, his happiness.

“ Speak to me, Anna, dearest Anna,” said he at last ; “ tell me I may directly go to Mr. Fosdyke and tell him all my wishes, and that you have sanctioned my application to him. Let my happiness be announced, and my right to be ever with you recognised at once.”

“ Not so, Edward,” returned she, with difficulty forcing her lips to speak ; “ rather let us pause awhile, and think what we are doing. It seems so wonderful—so strange to me,” said she, for a moment covering her face with both her hands, and then again looking up. “ All this,” continued she, “ is too hasty to be wise, perhaps too sudden to be lasting.”

“ Whose feelings do you doubt, Anna ?” asked he, reproachfully ; “ for though your lips have spoken no words, your eye has returned my glance, your hand permitted the pressure of mine—you have admitted that I do not love in vain. Is it not so,

dearest Anna? Let your voice confirm these signs."

"But will you not," returned she, "think that love so easily granted, so quickly kindled, cannot be of much sterling value?"

"Oh, do not calculate our knowledge of each other," replied Sir Edward, "by weeks and days. Do not circumstances change all measurement of time? Think with what intimacy, with what unreserve we have met day after day through these last happy months. Remember how eagerly from the first I have watched every turn of your speaking countenance, and marked each inflexion of your voice, and you will, you must acknowledge, that such intercourse is worth more than the ordinary acquaintance of years. All my faults—all my follies you know, Anna. I have concealed nothing from you; and if you can love me now as you see me, for what further knowledge of each other must we wait?"

"I feel, indeed, Edward," returned she, "that our acquaintance has been far different from an ordinary one. Should I otherwise be seated by you here—listening to you thus quietly on such a theme; but it is not only that, in spite of the intimacy with

which we have met, we cannot as yet judge of each other's character, but that we are both too young to decide on what must make or mar our happiness for life. Besides this—" added she, and then she paused, and a vivid flush rose on her cheeks.

"Dearest Anna!" exclaimed Sir Edward, "you have some other reason against granting me what I wish. If you love me, I cannot understand such prudent forethought. Tell me what was that other reason."

"I fear," replied she, almost faltering as she spoke, "it is one which should make me do more than beg you to postpone what you ask for. I am not sure that it ought not to have been sufficient to have prevented me from admitting—from feeling the—the regard," added she, after in vain seeking for a term that pleased her better, "that I have already allowed you to perceive—"

"Do you mean," asked he, hastily, "that you think my religious opinions, or principles rather, do not accord with your own?"

She did not deny it, and he continued earnestly—

"Believe me, we only differ in the practical application of our opinions. Lightly

as you perhaps imagine I think of the subject—lightly as I must confess I do compared with what you do, or with what I know I ought to do, yet you may trust me I would not seek to marry the most lovely of her sex—I would not seek to marry *you*, if I did not believe that our religious views and wishes were the same. Oh, Anna, will you drive me from you because I am less excellent than yourself—because you might hope to lead me by your example to higher and better things than I could attain without it!"

"Were I even what you please yourself by fancying me," returned she, half sadly, "I know not that the experiment would be a wise one; but if you really knew me as you imagine you do—if you really knew me as you ought to know one whom you seek to make your wife, you would be aware that, instead of being capable of leading another in the right path, I am so weak and wavering myself that I need constant help. No, Edward, I cannot be your guide."

"But, Anna!" exclaimed he, hastily starting from his seat, and then as hastily resuming it, "you do not mean to torture me by telling me you return my love, and then

bidding me leave you? Tell me what you wish," added he, again all gentleness, as he saw her tears forcing their way through her hand which supported her head, and concealed from him her face—"tell me what you wish, dearest Anna. I will be contented to submit to any condition that hold out hope for me at last."

"Give me time to think," replied she; "to consider myself—to consider you. If I were to see you more deeply imbued with religious principles—more acknowledging them in your every-day life, I should not fear my own feelings as I do now."

"I will become all you wish me, dearest; I will strive to think and act with you for my model, Anna," returned Sir Edward, "only promise that you will be mine, as I now pledge my faith to you."

"No, no, Edward," replied she; "we must not be bound to each other. I can make no promise—I will receive no pledge. You have told me that you love me, I have confessed that I return your affection. Let this suffice for each of us during the months, the year or two that must pass before I can consent to your openly seeking me from my guardian. I am now just eighteen, Edward;

surely twenty is not too late a time to fix for making a decision which affects our happiness through life. During this interval, if you love me you will turn your attention to the subject which, I believe I may truly say, most engrosses my thoughts. If it once take possession of your mind, you cannot fail to perceive its vast and overwhelming importance; and if, by the time I have named, your sentiments for me still remain the same—if your affection bears the test of delay, and our hearts are united on all subjects, as those should be who hope to remain side by side through time and through eternity, then you may claim me as your own."

"Oh, Anna!" cried Sir Edward, seizing her hand, and pressing it to his lips before she could succeed in disengaging it from him, "what delight and what torment do your words give me. How can I thank you, as I feel I ought, for the dear confession that you are not indifferent to me, and how can I consent to submit to your hard conditions? Must I for two long years endure to see you approached by all who know how to admire loveliness and to appreciate excellence, and not dare to interfere—

not presume to show that I have a prior interest in your heart?"

"Indeed, Edward," returned Anna, gently, but with firmness, "it must be so. I cannot consent to any engagement subsisting between us; a little reflection will show you that I am right. You may perhaps be the best judge of your own character, but with regard to myself I feel I am too young, too inexperienced to venture to promise to undertake duties so new and important as those you would press upon me. The two years for which I stipulate may, in some measure, prepare you for them. If, after that time has elapsed, we both still feel that we are desirous of attempting to form each other's happiness, we shall not then find we have lost anything by having passed the interval unfettered by promises; and if—remember our youth, dear Edward—remember the shortness, the suddenness of our attachment, and admit that it may be possible,—if we find that we have deceived ourselves—that such an union is not likely to prove what we now fancy it might be, how thankful shall we be for the prudence which now causes your displeasure."

All Anna's eloquence failed to convince

her lover of the wisdom of her wishes; but as she was firm in her determination to pledge herself to nothing, and to receive no promise from him, he could only yield an unwilling consent. She was averse to imparting to any one what had passed between them, as doing so, she argued, must tend to strengthen the feeling that they were bound to each other by the confession of mutual attachment which each had made. Not even to Charlotte would she confide the secret; and she earnestly begged him not to show in his manner to her any unusual attention which might draw remark to her. She wished their tone to remain what it had ever been, one of friendly intimacy, but nothing more. These Sir Edward felt were hard conditions; but though he promised to observe them, it was not till he had spent so long a time in imploring some mitigation, that they were disturbed in their retreat by the sound of the luncheon-bell. Sir Edward made his way out of the shrubbery, and Anna, still astonished and bewildered at what had occurred, returned to the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE summer was passing away, and rapidly turning into autumn, and the Chollerton party remained in much the same position as we have seen them. Sir Edward so honourably kept to the conditions laid down for him by Miss Marsden, that no one entertained an idea of the sentiments with which he regarded her excepting his friend Arthur. Not many days had elapsed since the scene that we have described took place before he felt convinced that Sir Edward loved her, and was conscious that he was beloved in return. Truly and cordially he rejoiced in perceiving that it was so; for though deeply determined to eradicate from his heart all feeling of love for her, he knew that he must ever regard her with sincere affection, and feel the greatest interest in her welfare and happiness; and he knew not how it could be better secured than in an union with a true-hearted, upright man, such as he believed Belcomb to be. But one thought troubled him as his mind dwelt upon the subject, and that led him more earnestly even than he had ever done before, to pray

that his friend might be more thoroughly awakened to the paramount necessity of striving to live a life of holiness, and of endeavouring to find strength and grace to do so by constantly seeking for God's assistance through His ordinances, and by consistent obedient self-denial.

The time had now approached at which Arthur had intended to present himself for ordination ; but though greatly pained and humbled at feeling a delay he had so little expected necessary, he would not attempt to take the sacred office upon him till he could honestly say that he could do so with an undivided heart. The announcement he was thus forced to make to his family, of his intention to defer his ordination, was followed by much that was very painful to him, but he received it humbly as a portion of the punishment he felt due to him for having failed in the entire dedication of himself to God's service which he had meditated. His father and mother, both of whom had been distressed at the first expression of his wishes to enter the priesthood, now resumed all the arguments and entreaties they had for some time laid aside to induce him to relinquish his desire. This unexpected delay encou-

raged them to hope that, as the time approached, after which he could no longer draw back, he was beginning to falter in his purpose; and that, if frequently urged by the reasonings of one parent and the solicitations of the other, he might be induced to give up altogether a resolution which appeared already shaking. To this trying ordeal his own weakness had exposed him, and he bore it with unmurmuring patience. He could not explain to them his reason for finding a postponement of his wishes necessary, as he knew they would not comprehend his feelings, and that by doing so he would only expose himself to a still greater torrent of reproaches; and he therefore listened as far as he could in silence, and when forced to speak he did so with respectful firmness and unvarying gentleness. The constant effort required to keep such complete command over himself, as to enable him to abstain from any word in reply to the urgent requests or bitter taunts he received, which could call for censure, was of service to him in driving from his mind thoughts—they had at no moment amounted to wishes—which he considered unsuited to him; and before the three

months which he had allowed himself for the task had elapsed, he was able to return his humble and earnest thanks to God, who had, in answer to his prayers, enabled him to subdue in his heart the earthly affection, against the first germ of which he had struggled, fearing that, if permitted to grow and take root there, it must interfere with the total surrender of himself, his heart, his soul, and body, which he desired to be permitted to make to God, his Creator and Redeemer.

As the autumn passed and Mr. Fosdyke found that the wishes of his son continued unchangeable, he suffered all his opposition to the plan to which he had previously given his consent to cease, and now the period grew near which was to see Arthur ordained.

It was a time to which he had been looking forward with much eager desire for years, but now that it approached so nearly, the awful responsibilities and deeply sacred nature of the duties he was about to undertake nearly overwhelmed him. His time was almost exclusively passed in his own apartment, where his hours were spent in prayer and earnest meditation.

A woman's pen must not presume to follow him to that sacred edifice* which once no woman's foot was permitted to profane ; nor venture to describe what there took place, or attempt to tell with what trembling awe and deep fear of personal unworthiness he and others with him knelt before the reverend man who, by God's authority, admitted them to serve as His ministers before Him.

The hallowed rite concluded, Arthur Fosdyke returned to Choller顿, as had been before arranged, to act as Mr. Dampierre's curate, as his health, never very robust, was now appearing to suffer more than usual from the northern climate to which he had not been accustomed. What was the change that Anna found so visible in her cousin? How could the influence of a few days, eventful as they had been to him, be so strong upon him? Did it all belong to the slight alteration in his external appearance? Was there so much meaning in his white cravat and undeniably clerical dress? Or was there in truth something in his tone and manner that said he was now one separate and set apart from worldly matters?

* The Cathedral Church at Durham.

Anna asked herself the question, and acknowledged to herself that, let her answer it as she might, she felt a deference and reverence for him now, of which, with all her admiration of his excellence, she had not been conscious before.

For a time after Arthur's return to Choller顿, he remained an inmate of his father's house; but he found that by so doing, the claims his family were constantly making upon his time and the necessity of conforming to their hours, greatly interfered with his parochial duties and his strict observance of the ordinances of the Church. He therefore, after some little opposition from Mr. Fosdyke, and much earnest entreaty from his sister, placed himself and his books in some very comfortable lodgings in the village.

By degrees, without offending his parents, he contrived to avoid the frequent dining at the Lodge which they at first endeavoured to establish, as he was now so much occupied through the day among his flock, that the evening was nearly the only time he could appropriate to himself for study; but as he was far from wishing to deny himself the great pleasure of almost daily intercourse

with them, he made a point of invariably breakfasting there except on fast-days. From the time of his leaving the house of his father, he made and strictly adhered to a rule of never permitting himself the enjoyments of society on such occasions, unless he were unavoidably compelled by deference for his superiors to appear at a clerical meeting. For the first year or two this habit exposed him to some animadversions; he was frequently called a half-papist, occasionally a whole one, and now and then an ascetic; but as time wore on, and no one could discover that he in the slightest respect deviated from the doctrine or discipline of the Church as far as he was enabled to carry it out, and that at suitable times and on suitable occasions, he was willing to join cheerfully in scenes of pleasure, where his presence would not imply that he had forgotten the peculiar and sacred office which he filled, these rumours died away, and he was allowed to continue the even tenour of his way,—few presuming to censure him,—many respecting him, and some attempting to imitate him.

But in thus looking at Arthur through a series of years, we have thrown ourselves

beyond the course of events we have to detail.

During the winter the out-of-door recreations of long rides and pleasant pic-nics, in which Sir Edward was ever constantly in attendance, were necessarily thrown aside, but the intercourse between him and his friends was still very frequent, though Arthur had now ceased, except on rare occasions, to be of their party.

Chollerton was by no means a gossiping neighbourhood, but nevertheless it was impossible that such an intimacy as we have described could subsist between two families constructed as those were at the Hall and at the Lodge, without giving rise to some speculation as to what would be the probable end of it. Sir Edward was in love,—all opinions agreed in that,—and the object of his affections dwelt at Fosdyke Lodge; on that point also there could be no doubt: but beyond that the good people who turned their attention to the subject differed—some feeling convinced it was Anna Marsden whom he sought, others fully persuaded that Charlotte Fosdyke was the object of attraction.

Among those who could come to no de-

cided conclusion was Mrs. Fosdyke, but as she liked and esteemed Sir Edward on the one hand, but had no great desire to lose her daughter on the other, she was pleased at the idea of seeing him connected with their family, and cared not much whether it was to be as her son-in-law or as the husband of her young cousin. Neither she nor Mr. Fosdyke had the least conception that it was possible their gay, light-hearted Charlotte could be attaching herself to him in a manner to render her future happiness doubtful, if perchance it was her friend who had won his affection. Charlotte, indeed, had not yet acknowledged to herself that her heart was touched. She knew she had always liked and valued Sir Edward; she could not remember the time when it was not so, and now the nature of her regard was day by day changing and deepening into a feeling that was likely to colour her whole life without her being at all aware of it.

That Anna and Sir Edward himself, fully occupied as they were with their own sentiments towards each other, should not perceive this, was in no degree surprising. Had Mrs. Travers been a little younger and

more frequently a witness to what was going on, it is probable that her keen-sightedness would have discovered that, in spite of the present enjoyments of the set, there was sorrow in store for some of them; but the cold weather, as usual, confined her to her own house, and her aversion to anything in the shape of tittle-tattle was too well known for any one to venture to retail to her the proceedings, either actual or supposed, of her neighbours.

Time and circumstances, therefore, continued to confirm Charlotte in what seemed incapable of any favourable issue, without her receiving a note of warning from any one.

CHAPTER XX.

WE must now beg our readers to pass with us over the interval of a year. It is again winter—in the south of England it might be called verging towards the spring, but at Chollerton autumn remained considerably later than it did in some other parts of the

country, and spring was a season almost unknown.

Arthur Fosdyke had now been ordained a priest. He was no sooner in full orders than Mr. Dampierre accomplished a design he had for some time contemplated: he resigned his living, finding he was unable to perform the duties of it, and the Bishop of the diocese, to Arthur's great astonishment, presented it to him.

He felt the charge of such a parish to be a heavy responsibility; but it was a responsibility he had fervently prayed he might be fitted to bear, and he did not shrink from it. His labours were not greatly increased by becoming Rector of the place where he had during the last fifteen months officiated as Curate, as Mr. Dampierre had been compelled, by the state of his health, to resign nearly all his parochial duties to him. No difference in his habits or mode of living was visible in him, except that he now inhabited the Rectory instead of his former lodgings in the village. He was as self-denying and scrupulous in his personal expenses now that he was in the receipt of what might be called a large income for a single man situated as he was, as he had

been when he only possessed a small one, and though no one ever saw the name of the Reverend Arthur Fosdyke, Rector of Chollerton, figuring in any subscription list, or found his winter donation of coals, blankets, soup, &c., in the county newspaper, yet we may affirm that at the end of each year his balance in his banker's hands was not worth inquiring after.

Mr. Dampierre, since he had first had the living, had so increased the opportunities of his people for attending divine service, that there was not room for Arthur to effect much improvement in this respect; but he soon established the evening prayer, and permitted his flock to receive the holy communion on all the festivals in the year, as well as in the ordinary course every month. He also announced from the altar the fast-days to be observed through the week, whereas Mr. Dampierre had only been in the habit of naming the feasts. He rejoiced in being able to follow the example of his predecessor in using the offertory sentences and the prayer for the Church Militant on the Sundays as well as on the Saints'-days, instead of being the first to restore that important part of the appointed service. It

had happily been the almost general practice in the diocese where he served to retain the use of the sacred vestment throughout the performance of Divine Service, and he was therefore enabled to obey the instructions of the rubric on this point, without fearing that by observing his own duty he might lead his flock into committing the great sin of treating him with disrespect, and rebelling against the rules of the Church. He was now in the position which he had during many years prayed to be allowed to fill. The arduous duties, the awful responsibilities of it he found perhaps greater than he had anticipated, though they had never been lightly esteemed by him; and when he was led in the execution of his duty to the side of

“A moaning sinner, on his dying bed,
* * * *

Too weak for prayer, for sacrament unmeet,”

he too would exclaim in the words of one who had doubtless felt what he expressed,

“What sight was this a pastor’s eye to greet!”

But he was strong in the unflinching dedication of himself to the cause in which he laboured; and we may believe he was

abundantly blessed in receiving the aid which he never ceased most earnestly to seek. And who shall say that even in this life, in the midst of his unwearying, and oftentimes unthankfully accepted, labours, he did not in some measure receive his reward.

When Arthur first established the evening service, Anna felt in doubt as to the propriety of making some attempt to attend it, as it was at an hour which rendered it difficult for her to do so without interfering with the necessary observance of the hours at Fosdyke Lodge; but now, in any little trouble of this nature, her path was easy. Arthur was now her appointed spiritual guide, and to him she went simply and deferentially, without a thought of doing otherwise than as he enjoined her. He received and answered her application in a manner and tone that shewed he felt their relation toward each other was changed. It was now his place to direct her, and hers to obey him. In this instance, he told her that situated as she was as a member of his father's family, she must relinquish the advantage which he had offered to others of his flock of joining in the public service of an evening, but bade her, in place of that,

in her own chamber use the prayers appointed by the Church, which, with the exception of the absolution and the prayer of St. Chrysostom, she would find as suitable for private as for public use. This she promised to do; and in health and in sickness, in joy and in sorrow, she observed this rule through life whenever she was prevented from joining in the public prayers; finding it at first perhaps somewhat an irksome and unsatisfactory duty, but she continued to perform it in a spirit of obedience, and ere long met her reward in finding it the means of once again in the day withdrawing her mind from its too frequent contemplation of the things of this world, and fixing it on those better objects for which in our short and beautiful service we are taught to pray.

The winter weather did not prevent Anna from continuing her attendance at the morning service; and as Arthur still kept up the habit of frequently breakfasting at the Lodge, he often joined her as she returned home, but these walks were no longer so often made without other companions, as it had become no unusual circumstance for Charlotte and Sir Edward to be at church

also, and the latter always accompanied them on their return as far as their own gate.

As the days became shorter, the breakfast hour at the Fosdykes was apt to grow later, and our friends occasionally took advantage of this on a bright morning to prolong their walk. They were doing so all four, when the following conversation took place, caused by Sir Edward's saying, as they passed in their walk some cottages which formed the outskirts of the little village,

“I know you find, Arthur, that you have considerable influence among our poor neighbours here. To what do you attribute it? to their reverence for you as God's minister, or to their habitual and hereditary respect to a Fosdyke?”

“I fear,” replied Arthur, “chiefly to the latter feeling, which, though praiseworthy and useful in its degree, is of course a far lower and less efficacious principle than a reverence to my office among them. I am, however, thankful at being permitted at this outset of my labours, when I must necessarily be ignorant of every thing but the theory of my position, to find myself placed

where there exists a feeling of respect for me to begin upon."

"But," asked Anna, "do you not find that, in those instances where the absence of the higher feeling which you have mentioned arises from an ignorance of your claim on their obedience, and not from an irreverent rebellious spirit, it is easy to inspire them with it?"

"I wish I did, Anna," replied he; "especially as I fear one part of the difficulty arises from my own fault. I should not be so much afraid of appearing to exalt myself, and to be seeking undue spiritual authority, if I thought less of myself individually and more of the sacred office which I fill. A reluctance to argue and dwell upon that point, which looks like modesty, too often proceeds from a dread of being misinterpreted, and being called arrogant and presumptuous, which would, I think, rarely be the case if we were indeed deeply impressed with a sense of our own unworthiness, and a conviction that so much only in us deserves deference as we have received from Him we serve."

"I can conceive no portion of the duty of a parish priest more difficult," observed Sir

Edward, "than what you have now mentioned, and yet how important, how essential it is that the real position that you occupy towards us of the laity should be understood. I attribute much of the irreverence and lukewarmness and the absence of what one may call Church-feeling generally in the people to the prevailing ignorance on this point, more so than to any determined rejection of a belief in the power and authority of the priesthood."

"I quite agree with you there," returned Arthur. "I believe there is naturally in the human mind a very fervent desire to look up to something above itself; a feeling of reverence is the easiest kindled, and the most delightful to a mind unobscured by false and worldly ideas."

"How evidently we perceive that," observed Anna, "in watching children! How beautiful is the deep reverence and simple faith of a child! It is impossible to watch a child's mind and not feel that indeed 'of such are the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

"If what you have now both said is true," replied Arthur gravely, "and I dare not deny either proposition, if a reverence for holy things, for holy places, holy seasons,

holy ceremonies, and the holy office, does form part of the temperament belonging to those who are of the Kingdom of Heaven; and if the lamentable want of that reverence which now prevails among us be the result of ignorance, and not of obstinacy, how great is the sin that lies at the door of us who are the appointed teachers of the people! And other evils, other sins," added he, deeply sighing, "follow, all of which may perhaps in their degree be traced to our neglecting to point out to our respective flocks the great duty of obedience to spiritual authority. How greatly less might be, under God's blessing, the sins of false doctrine, heresy, and schism, in the land, if the true power of the Church and of her clergy were plainly set before the people!"

"Certainly," said Sir Edward, "nothing would practically tend more to discourage dissent among the lower classes than seeing the rules of the Church and the authority of the priesthood duly regarded among those above them. We cannot expect them to have the means and opportunity of satisfying themselves by their individual research of the true nature of the Church, and therefore must not wonder if we see them despise

an authority which they see set at nought by those better instructed than themselves."

"It always appears to me," observed Anna, "that people very much lose sight of their own duties and of the duties of the clergy, when they, as is so frequently the case, consider the obligation which rests upon a parish priest to visit and instruct his flock confines itself to those who belong quite to the lower orders."

"Certainly," said Charlotte, "we are rather in the habit of thinking that the private exhortations of the clergy are, as Mrs. Mason said of the medicine she gave to Betty Green, very good for poor people."

"But you remember, Charlotte," returned her brother, "that Betty Green rejected the medicine so recommended, and took what my mother sent her, who, as she knew, had tried and benefited by it herself in the same illness from which she was suffering. The poorest and most ignorant know that we are all suffering under the same disease, and all need the same treatment. The physician and the medicine that they see despised by the rich and the learned they cannot think will be beneficial in their own case."

"I do not think we can say," replied

Charlotte, "that we see the clergy and the advice they give despised by the educated orders; for we rarely see it offered. Should you not have thought it strange, if Mr. Dampierre had attacked papa about attending the daily service for instance, or remaining to receive the sacrament more frequently, or on any other point on which their opinions differed? Or, in your own case, do you think you could presume to interfere with the habits of any of the higher classes of your congregation?"

"How far," returned Arthur gravely, "I may have as yet succeeded in the due performance of this most painful part of my office, I need not now say. It is sufficient for our present discussion if I affirm that, whether the doing so might be found strange, or even presumptuous, or no, I am bound to use private admonitions and exhortations, as well as public, to those that are whole, as well as to those that are sick. Have I not vowed so to use the authority committed to me at my ordination, and how can I safely allow any fear of man's judgment to make me neglect to perform a promise so solemnly made?"

"Forgive me, Arthur," said Charlotte,

"if I asked you a question that pained you, or seemed impertinent. I did not know that such a promise as you speak of was required from you at ordination."

"Have you then never read the Ordination Service, Lotte," asked her brother, "or have you forgotten that part of it?"

"I have never read it," replied she; "I don't think I ever saw it. Do you think one ought to read it, Arthur; people, I mean, like me, whom it cannot concern?"

"I certainly think you and every other member of the Church ought to read it," replied he, "because it does concern you, and very practically. How can you know what reverence and obedience is due to those who are set over you, if you have not been made aware of what authority to guide you has been committed to them; and where do you find that so plainly set forth as in the Ordination Service?"

"I do not wish to dispute what you say, Fosdyke," observed Sir Edward, "for I fully agree with you in thinking that the formularies of our Church ought to be known among Her members; but might not some say that we need not go to the Prayer-book

to discover that obedience is due to our spiritual guides? We may find that clearly announced in Scripture."

"Doubtless," replied Arthur, "whatever may be learnt from our Prayer-book must be founded on what is contained in Holy Scripture; otherwise it were nothing worth. But it will not do to refer an individual to the Bible with the licence to deduce what meaning he chooses from different passages to be found there, as we know to what fatally erroneous conclusions persons have come, who have endeavoured honestly to study the Word of God, but have interpreted it according to their private judgment. But in reading the Service appointed for Ordination, we see what sense the Church has ever put upon the passages there used, and learn therefrom in what sense we are ourselves bound to receive them. Lotte dearest," continued Arthur, turning to his sister, "you must not let the day pass without reading the Service for ordaining deacons and priests, and the form of Consecration of Bishops."

"No, certainly," replied Charlotte, slightly colouring; "but I do not think I know where to find it. Did you not say, Sir Edward,

that it was in the Prayer-book? I am almost sure it is not in mine."

"Then yours is an imperfect Prayer-book, Lotte," returned her brother, "and some day I will give you a better one; but you must not put off till then what you have promised me. Anna, can you help my sister in her dilemma?"

"Yes, Lotte," said her cousin, "I will lend you my Prayer-book after breakfast."

"And I suppose, Anna," returned Charlotte, "by your knowing that your Prayer-book contains these services, that you have read them yourself."

"Yes," answered Anna, finding she waited for a reply.

"How odd it seems to me," exclaimed Charlotte, "that you should have read all those sort of things!"

Sir Edward smiled,—Arthur sighed,—Anna blushed,—but nobody said that it was more odd that Charlotte, being professedly an educated member of the Church, should be ignorant of so much that it essentially concerned her to know.

CHAPTER XXI.

“OH, Anna, look here,” cried Charlotte, hastily entering the boudoir, where her cousin was sitting, not many days after the conversation recorded in the last chapter took place; “look at this Prayer-book which Arthur has just given me. Is it not beautiful?”

“It is, indeed,” returned Anna, “with that simple Cross, the holy emblem of our religion on it, without surrounding ornament of any kind. I like that very much; but is not that his writing inside the cover. May I see what he has written there?”

“I will read it to you,” replied Charlotte; “it is so like him. I am sure he fully meant it when he wrote it. ‘Charlotte Fosdyke, from her attached pastor and brother.’ You see, Anna, he puts pastor first, as if he felt that to be the more important connexion; ‘from her attached pastor and brother Arthur Fosdyke, with his earnest prayer that by constant study and by daily devout use of this Holy Volume, she may become thoroughly acquainted with its contents and deeply imbued with its spirit.’ ”

“I trust, dearest Lotte,” said her friend, breaking the silence that followed her reading these few words, “that his prayer may be fulfilled. The prayer of so affectionate a brother, so zealous a minister of God’s word, ought not to be lightly thought of by you. Doubtless he prays for the spiritual welfare of all those committed to his charge, but perhaps more earnestly for you than for any of us.”

“Indeed I do not think lightly of it,” returned Charlotte; “I am sure if the prayers of any mortal are heard on high, his must be among the number, for I believe none can proceed from a purer heart. I wish,” added she with a sigh, “I could be more what he would wish to see me,—more like you, Anna,—but I know not how to set about it. Cannot you be more than my model, dearest Anna; cannot you be my teacher, and show me how to imitate you?”

“Nay, Lotte,” replied her cousin, “I must be neither the one nor the other. I am too weak and sinful to be the first, and I have no right to be the last. I can but advise you to follow what I believe to be the surest path to the attainment of holiness,

and pray that you may succeed better than I have done. You hold in your hand the best guide that I know of: I believe you will find a resolution to live in daily obedience to the injunctions of our Prayer-book the best means of cultivating or sustaining in yourself a right spirit, and of producing a holy life; but, dearest Lotte, why should you come to me for such advice as this? I know it is often almost useless to say to persons that their duty in any difficulty is to apply to their pastor and submit to his guidance; for, however much to be lamented the fact may be, it is too true that, constituted as society is at present, and the clergy holding the position among us that they do, it is practically nearly impossible to do what is so clear a duty and would be so great a comfort. But with you now, Lotte, this is not so. He to whom you are bound to submit yourself, whose advice you have a right to ask, is your own brother, to whom you can apply without scruple or discomfort of any kind."

"I own," replied Charlotte, "it ought to be easier to me than to any other of his parishioners, but still I could not do so without a struggle. You, Anna, are almost

like a sister to him now; could you apply to him in a straightforward manner if you wanted his advice,—resolving to follow it,—feeling bound to obey it?”

“Certainly I could,” answered Anna; “nay, I *have* done so, without finding any difficulty at all. As to feeling bound to obey his injunctions, of course I should feel that towards any one who was set over me as my pastor, if he thought fit to direct me in any spiritual matter.”

“Then, Anna,” asked Charlotte, in a tone as if she were half doubtful how her observation would be received, “then you believe simply and firmly all that is contained in those extraordinary Services that Arthur made me read for the first time the other day?”

“I believe simply and firmly,” replied Anna, distinctly and almost with solemnity, “everything taught by our Holy Church. I acknowledge with an unhesitating mind every article of Her doctrine, and I desire humbly to receive and submit to every portion of Her discipline.”

“Anna, if it is indeed so with you, I envy you!” returned her cousin; “Can your mind really bend before every article of faith con-

tained in this Volume?" said she, laying her hand upon the Prayer-book which she still held. "Since our conversation the other morning I have read much here at which I never looked before, and which contains doctrines that I did not know were held in our Church; and some portions which I had read, in which I have joined, now seem to me to bear a different meaning from what I conceived before. All this has puzzled and bewildered me in a manner to make me envy your quiet satisfied belief. Some points, I confess, have so surprised and staggered me, that I know not what to think. All the arguments that might be, that are daily brought against them, come too strongly before my mind to be refuted. Do such thoughts never disturb you, Anna?"

"I have been taught, dearest Charlotte," returned Anna, "to believe on authority. I have been convinced that the Church is what She represents Herself to be, 'the witness and keeper of Holy Writ,' and that 'She hath authority in controversies of faith.' I dare not presume, therefore, to reject what She bids me receive, nor in the exercise of my own private judgment put a

different interpretation upon Scripture than what She in Her Liturgies and formularies has done."

"No arguments, then," said Charlotte, "tending to show the reasonableness of a doubt in the Divine power bestowed at ordination, the impossibility of grace being given to an infant in baptism, or the superstition of seeing in the consecrated elements more than bread and wine,—no arguments, however powerful, would in any degree move you?"

"Certainly not," answered Anna; "as I know these are among the points that have been decided upon by an authority which cannot err, and to which I am bound as humbly and unequivocally to submit my mind as to any plain statement of Holy Scripture—by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. But, my dearest cousin," continued Anna, with much earnestness, "I hope, I trust, you have only put these questions to me to ascertain my own opinions upon the points you have mentioned. It is not possible you can have permitted yourself to decide upon such high and important doctrines according to your own limited power of judgment, and that in doing so

you have been led to deny what we are so deeply bound to believe. If it be so, dearest Charlotte, in the slightest degree, let me implore you not to content yourself with talking to me about it. Do not be satisfied by studying even Scripture itself without being guided by those who are better able and more fit than you are to discover its true meaning. Speak to your brother, dearest, you cannot fear him."

"No, Anna," returned Charlotte, "I do not fear him exactly; and yet I suppose I do too, for I feel very unwilling to talk to him upon some subjects. I would rather talk to you a little, if you would let me, and if you cannot explain what I want to understand, perhaps I will ask him afterwards. I hear him often, and you too sometimes, as you did just now, speak of the Church, and of listening to the voice of the Church: who—where—what is the Church, and how does its voice speak to us?"

"The Church," returned Anna, after a moment's pause, in which she doubted whether she ought to attempt, as well as she was able, to answer her cousin's questions or to refuse to do so on the ground that she was not competent to discuss matters so

high: "The Church on Earth I conceive to be those who have Christ for their Head, and have held in all ages the one true and Apostolic faith into which He promised to guide His followers; and the voice of the Church comes to us who are unlearned, through our Liturgies and Creeds. To those who are able, and therefore bound, to seek further, and ascertain that these really contain the same truths that the apostles derived from Christ and transmitted to those that followed them, to those the voice of the Church is found in the consentient testimony of divines from our own times up through the ancient fathers to the Apostles and their Head. If we find that any point of doctrine that is now by some unhappily denied —take Baptismal Regeneration, for instance, which you mentioned—if we find that it has been believed at all times, in all places, and by all persons, from the earliest ages of the Church, we are bound to receive it as a Catholic doctrine, which we may not dare to reject, though it may be to us, as are other things in Holy Scripture, 'hard to be understood.' "

"But, Anna," said Charlotte, "are you not coming to tradition, and are we not

warned in Scripture against trusting to tradition?"

"We are warned," replied her cousin, "against the traditions which 'make the law of none effect,' but we are also told to 'stand fast and keep the traditions which we have been taught.' If it be true that there are in Holy Scripture 'things hard to be understood, which they which are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction,' and that it is as much the case now as it was when St. James wrote, we see, by the varied forms of heresy and schism into which persons professedly drawing their faith from the Bible continually fall, we must surely feel the great necessity of some guide to teach us the true interpretation of them. This unerring guide tradition is to us; and that our own branch of the Church Catholic looks upon it in this light, we find from the injunctions She gives to Her ministers, to preach only what the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops have collected from the source which is equally the rule of all who call themselves Christians."

"But you know practically," observed Charlotte, "that our clergy do not all re-

ceive and teach the doctrines so handed down to us. I do not pretend to know what are or what are not what you call Catholic doctrines, but if to-day I hear one man say from the pulpit that the grace of God and actual forgiveness of original sin is conveyed in baptism, and to-morrow that it is a soul-destroying heresy to believe that any efficacy belongs to the ceremony, it is plain to me that one or the other is in error; and how am I, or others even, if possible, less fitted by education and position than I am, to find out on which side truth lies?"

" You have your Prayer-book, Charlotte," returned her cousin; " you can always turn to that and find which doctrine is in accordance with what is there taught. I do not think there is any point on which we may now be unfortunate enough to hear discordant opinions from the pulpit which the Prayer-book does not very plainly bring before us in the true Catholic light. In our Baptismal service the priest says, ' Seeing this child is regenerate,' and then he returns thanks to God for having regenerated the child in and through baptism. This must suffice to satisfy us if we are obedient members of the Church, of which

this book is the rule and manual. Our Catechism teaches us that in the Lord's Supper the 'body and blood of Christ are verily, and indeed taken and received.' In the service for the Holy Communion we pray that we may so eat the flesh and drink the blood of our blessed Saviour, that our sinful bodies may be made clean, and our souls washed thereby; and we subsequently thank God for having fed us 'with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood' of our Lord. Dare we join in this holy service, and assert that we receive but a sign and symbol of something absent and unreal, and reduce what we are taught is a most efficacious means of grace, into a merely edifying rite? Take the third point you mentioned—the power bestowed at ordination. Read those awfully solemn words in the Ordination Service—'Receive thou the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained,' and then see how the power there received is used in the invitation given at the conclusion of the exhortation, giving warning of the celebration of the Holy Communion to all those

whose conscience is troubled to come to the priest and receive from him ‘the benefit of Absolution;’ and in the service for the Visitation of the Sick, where the priest is empowered to say, ‘I absolve thee from all thy sins.’ We may reject and throw ourselves out of our Church, but as long as we profess to belong to Her, to believe in Her doctrines, and be guided by Her ritual, we cannot deny that Her priesthood possesses Divine authority transmitted from Christ himself; and that they are the order of men to whom we are to ‘submit ourselves as having the rule over us.’”

Anna paused, but Charlotte continuing some moments silent, as if pondering her cousin’s words, she added, “I hope, Lotte, I may not have been doing what is wrong and presumptuous in attempting to speak to you on such great matters, which are too high for me. I always feel my own ignorance and unworthiness to dwell on such subjects too much to enter upon them willingly; but still appealed to as I was by you, I did not like to refuse to endeavour to give a reason for the faith that is in me, even though I could do it but very imperfectly; and I greatly hope, dearest Lotte, that you

will be induced to listen to Arthur, and then if I have said anything that is likely to lead you astray, he will tell you so."

"Do not fancy, dear cousin," returned Charlotte, "that you can have been wrong in trying to make me understand some points on which I ought not to remain in the dark, particularly as you find I am more inclined to listen to you than to any one else. You can congratulate yourself now upon having said enough to set me thinking a good deal, and I dare say the result will be what you wish. I shall feel it necessary to know more, and shall be driven to Arthur at last. Now let us walk; if we have time I should like to go and call on Mrs. Riley."

To Mrs. Riley's they went, and found her and her daughters together. Their first greetings were scarcely over, before Louisa, who, from some peculiar faculty yet unnamed by Spurzheim or Combe, always contrived to be the earliest recipient of any news that was flying on the wing of rumour through the country, exclaimed eagerly—

"Now, Charlotte, you can tell us if it is really true that your brother has refused to preach a sermon next Thursday to the tee-totallers at W—, though he has been

asked to do so by Mr. Listowel, the Vicar."

"I really cannot tell you, Louisa," answered Charlotte, "for I have never heard him mention the subject. You always hear everything before any one else. I did not know Mr. Listowel had asked Arthur to preach for him. Did you, Anna?"

"No," returned her cousin, breaking off her conversation with Mrs. Riley, who then resumed her book, which, at their entrance, she had laid aside; "I heard nothing about it."

"It is quite certain Mr. Listowel has asked Mr. Fosdyke to preach for him," reiterated Louisa, in a decidedly well informed tone, "and the only matter in dispute is whether he has refused or not. Laura Metcalfe was here this morning, and she says that the whole town is talking about it; but I told her point-blank I did not believe it. We almost quarrelled about it, but I would not give up my opinion."

"On what did you ground your opinion, Miss Riley?" asked Anna, half smiling in a manner that caught Mary's attention, and forced a smile from her too. "Had you heard Arthur say that he had consented,

or that he would consent if he were asked?"

"Oh, no," replied she, almost indignantly; "I felt quite sure of it from my long knowledge of Mr. Fosdyke. He is much too gentlemanlike to refuse a complimentary request like this from a brother clergyman. I thought, Miss Marsden, that our Rector was a great favourite of yours, and yet it seems you would not venture to vouch for his obliging disposition as I have done."

"I have certainly a very great respect and a sincere regard for my cousin," returned Anna, slightly colouring, "and also a strong conviction that he would act rightly and consistently if he were asked, as you suppose him to have been, to preach for Mr. Listowel; but I cannot say I feel certain he would not refuse such a request."

"How very ill-natured you must think him!" exclaimed Louisa; "Charlotte, will not you take your brother's part? Do you not think it very unkind of Miss Marsden to suppose he would be so disobliging as to refuse such a trifle, particularly as the asking him is meant as a compliment—a compliment, too, that perhaps every clergyman

in the neighbourhood would scarcely like to pay him, you know?"

"I know no clergyman in the neighbourhood, Louisa," replied Charlotte, quickly, "who would not enable his congregation to hear a better sermon than they are accustomed to, and preached by a better man, if he were to give up his pulpit to Arthur."

"Lotte," said her cousin, endeavouring to prevent her from finishing this affectionate but ill-judged observation, "dear Lotte, Arthur would be greatly displeased if he were to know what you are saying."

"I know he would," returned Charlotte, laughing again in perfect good humour, now that she had relieved herself by this slight ebullition, "but I hope he will remain in ignorance of my having been induced to give vent to a little burst of indignation. Louisa, you will not tell him for the sake of making him scold me—will you?"

"But, Lotte," said Mary, seeing her sister did not reply, "you have not told us if you think Mr. Fosdyke would consent to preach this sermon?"

"Oh, I suppose he would," returned Charlotte; "I do not know why Anna doubts it.

Arthur is always good-natured and obliging, and does not care how much trouble he takes to please people. Why do you think he would refuse, Anna?"

"I only said I did not feel sure he would consent to do it," replied Anna. "As I have never heard him say anything upon the subject, I have no right to say what he would do; but you can understand that it is possible he might think it right to decline it, though he did not mind the trouble."

"No, indeed," returned Louisa; "I cannot understand such a thing at all; and I should very much like to know what reason he could have for declining, except the churlish one of not choosing to give himself the trouble of writing a sermon that, perhaps, would not do afterwards for his own congregation; and that," added she, "we must all acknowledge, would be very unlike Arthur Fosdyke. I wish you would tell us what reason he could have, Miss Marsden?"

"Nay," said Anna, "I had better not presume to put forth ideas as Arthur's, which he might think fit to repudiate."

"If you are so anxious, Louisa, to have a true and authentic statement of Arthur's notions upon the subject," observed Char-

lotte, "you had better put yourself in communication with him personally and hear what he has to say for himself, in case Miss Metcalfe was rightly informed as to his having declined Mr. Listowel's proposal."

"I should much like to do so," returned Louisa, very seriously, "but I scarcely ever see him now."

"If you really wish for an opportunity of talking to him a little quietly," answered Charlotte, maliciously planning a scene from which she thought she should derive some amusement, while she chose to forget that it would surely annoy her brother—"if you really wish for an opportunity of talking to him, Louisa, you need only come to prayers to-morrow morning, and join us in our walk afterwards, and you will be able to ask him what you like."

"Come to prayers!" said Louisa, seemingly weighing in what she called her mind the *pros* and *cons* of such a scheme. "Dear me, Charlotte, I have never done such a thing in my life, but perhaps for once I might. I think I will go to-morrow, as you propose."

"Miss Riley will not obtain what she seeks to-morrow, Charlotte," said Anna,

gravely ; "you know your brother will not walk or return to breakfast with us to-morrow."

"No—true," replied Charlotte, colouring a little, she scarcely knew why ; "you must come on Saturday, Louisa."

Louisa looked inquiringly from Anna to Charlotte.

"Why will not to-morrow do?" asked she, after a moment's pause. Charlotte did not answer, so her cousin replied to the question.

"Mr. Fosdyke says he considers his morning walks between the service and breakfast as his pleasantest recreations, and he never indulges in them on the Church's fast-days."

Louisa looked as if some flippant remark rose to her lips in reply to this explanation; but it was checked by the expression of Anna's countenance, or by the fear, perhaps, of offending her friend Charlotte, whose weak point she knew to be her affection for her brother.

"We shall expect to see you, then, on Saturday morning," said Charlotte, rising, and bidding them adieu.

"Dear Lotte," began Anna, as soon as

they were again alone on their road home-wards, “have you not done unwisely—nay, forgive me, if I say wrongly?”

“About Arthur do you mean?” inquired Charlotte. “I granted directly that he would think me wrong, but you know I could not help it. I cannot bear to hear people talk as if there were anything reprehensible in Arthur’s conduct as a man or a clergyman, when we know, and everybody knows, how excellent he is in every respect; and Louisa had no right to insinuate that there were neighbouring clergymen who would not allow him to preach in their pulpits. In the first place, I do not believe it is true; and if it is, all I can say is, more shame for them.”

“You are really wrong, Lotte, to take it up in this tone,” replied her cousin; “and I suspect you agree with me in thinking so; if you do not, repeat the conversation as it took place to your brother, and hear what he will say to it.”

“No, thank you,” returned Charlotte, laughing; “one scolding upon the subject is enough, taken in conjunction with a slight feeling of my own, that I might just as well have said nothing of the sort.”

"But it was not of that I was thinking altogether," continued Anna, "when I said you had been rather foolish. Why did you suggest, Lotte, that Louisa Riley should join us with a prepared attack upon your brother, whom, you must remember, she has no right to call to account for his opinions or proceedings; and then to propose that she should come to church, not for the sake of joining in the prayers, but that she might be sure to catch the clergyman afterwards?"

"Well," said Charlotte, "I wish I had not said anything about coming to church. She might have joined us afterwards certainly, but I cannot help thinking it will be rather fun to hear her attack Arthur, and his quiet way of receiving it."

"Oh, Charlotte!" exclaimed Anne, "ought you to induce your friend to do what is wrong, and subject your brother to what is disagreeable, for the sake of what you call fun?"

Charlotte was silent for a moment, apparently watching a figure at some distance, but which was rapidly approaching them.

"Is not that Arthur coming towards us?" asked she, presently; "perhaps he will join us, and then I will tell him the appointment I have so foolishly made for him, and that

will enable him to escape it. Shall I, Anna?"

"I think you had better do so," replied Anna, "but you will not have an opportunity now, for see, he has not recognised us, and is turning into that cottage."

"Oh, but he cannot stay there long," said Charlotte. "Shall you mind waiting a little while for him? We might sit down on this bank, if you are not afraid of the cold."

They sat down and talked on various matters, then they rose and walked backwards and forwards on the road, and then they sat down again, and would have relinquished their purpose, but that Charlotte repeatedly said Arthur had now been there so long that he must soon appear. At last her brother issued from the low cottage-door, which he gently shut behind him. Charlotte started eagerly from her seat on the green sward, weary with waiting; but was checked in her hasty advance towards him by the grave and almost sad expression of his countenance.

And yet the scene he had just left was not one to produce sadness in a man of Arthur's feelings and position. He came from the death-bed of one who had learnt from him,

during his unwearied attendance upon him through many months, to look upon the suffering and trial of a long and painful illness, made more bitter by poverty, as the merciful chastisement of a Father. He had seen this endured with patience and resignation ; nay, with more than resignation, with a thankful and acquiescing spirit. He had now received the last penitent confession of the dying man, and, in the name of the Church, whose minister he was, given him absolution for his sins, and administered to him the most blessed Eucharist ; and, ere he had left the house of mourning and of prayer, he had witnessed the spirit cast off the burden of the flesh, and wing its way, in untrembling reliance upon an Almighty Saviour's merits, to the realms above.

For a moment Charlotte feared to break in upon the thoughts that appeared to engross him. He himself was the first to speak, and giving an arm to each, he asked them where they had been.

“ To Mrs. Riley's,” said Charlotte, “ and, as usual, I have been talking very fast, and saying what I might as well have left unsaid. Anna has been scolding me for it since we came away, and bids me tell you

all about it; partly because it concerns you, and partly, I believe, because she thinks you ought to know all our little misdemeanours, that we may benefit by your reproofs. Am I not right, Anna?" continued she, wishing to make Arthur look less grave and to produce a smile before she mentioned to him the arrangement for Saturday.

"Yes, quite right," replied Anna, in a quiet tone, that rather checked Charlotte's attempt to make a jest of it.

"Well, Lotte," said her brother, after pausing a moment for Charlotte to continue her narrative, "am I to hear what you did say?"

"First of all tell me," returned she, "is it true that Mr. Listowel has asked you to preach a sermon for him next Thursday at W——?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Fosdyke.

"Is it true that you have refused to do so, and that all the people in W—— are abusing you for it?"

"It is true," returned Arthur, "that I have refused; but I do not know whether anybody has made any remarks upon my doing so or not."

"Then you were right, after all, Anna,"

said Charlotte, " and Louisa and I were wrong."

" Has the propriety of my conduct in this respect been the theme of your conversation this morning?" asked Arthur, smiling.

" Not so much the propriety of refusing," said Charlotte; " I do not think we came to that, but the possibility of your doing so. Louisa said she was sure you would not refuse; I, that I thought most likely you would consent; and Anna, that it was very possible you might not."

" Well, Anna was right, certainly," said Arthur; " but I do not see that you were wrong in saying what you thought about it. Miss Riley was wrong in speaking decidedly upon a point of which she could know nothing, but you do not appear to have committed yourself so far."

" No, that's true," replied Charlotte; " but when we could not exactly determine who was likely to know best what you would do, and for what reason you would refuse to preach to oblige Mr. Listowel, I proposed that Louisa should come to church some morning, and join us in our walk afterwards, to ask you about it herself, and Anna thinks the arrangement will be displeasing to you."

“It is certainly displeasing to me, Charlotte,” returned Arthur, colouring with something like anger, “to hear it proposed that persons who despise, or at any rate neglect, the opportunities for public prayer that are afforded them, should be induced to join those who come to worship in God’s house, merely as the most convenient mode of keeping an appointment. The fact that Miss Louisa Riley’s conversation is far from agreeable to me, and that you know it to be so, Charlotte, is of much less consequence.”

“Dearest Arthur,” exclaimed Charlotte, sorrowfully, “I said it without reflecting, and I did not consider that you would think it so objectionable and disagreeable. I cannot, of course, help her coming to church now, but I told you of it on purpose that you might escape from it by not joining us on Saturday, and we will go home at once without our walk. Will not that do?”

“Forgive me, Lotte, if I spoke harshly of your friend,” replied Arthur, “and do not distress yourself about it now; only think more reverently of the purposes for which we meet in church. It is written, ‘My house shall be called the house of prayer,’

let us beware of using it in any other way. As to our walk, let Miss Riley walk with us by all means. I dare say she will say nothing disrespectful to my office, and even if she should, it is better that I should advise her to do so no more than prevent her from doing so by running away from her when she wishes to speak to me. For Saturday your engagement is made; I will remember it, and keep myself ready for it. I must leave you now, so good bye; good bye, Anna:" and he gave a hand to each.

"Cannot you dine with us to-day, Arthur?" asked Charlotte, holding his hand as if she did not like to let him go. "Mama will be so pleased."

"To-day!" said he, looking at her as if he felt well inclined to say 'yes' to the request.

"Oh do!" continued she eagerly, as she saw there was no very decided obstacle in the way of her wishes; "I know there is a place for you at the table, and it is so long since you have dined with us when we have had anybody with us. Mrs. Travers, the Belcombs, and the Fevershams, and Mr. Stowel, are coming," said she, enumerating those whom she knew he particularly liked to meet.

“No, dearest Charlotte,” said he, decidedly, drawing away his hand, “not to-day. I would rather not. Do not tell my mother I was nearly saying I would come; good bye:” and he hastened away to cheer with his presence and soothe with his prayers another sick-bed before the hour of prayer came which found him offering up the evening service in his church. This duty performed, he returned to his solitary morsel in the Rectory, where he spent the evening in quiet study and tranquil meditation.

Arthur Fosdyke had not refused to join the dinner party that was to assemble at his father’s house because he feared to sanction by his presence what he did not approve, but simply because he had found before, that the pleasure he derived from general conversation was too apt to draw his mind from the great business of his sacred profession, and the excitement it produced tended in some degree to unfit him for his duties if suddenly called upon to perform them. He knew many good and excellent clergymen with whom it was far otherwise, and he hoped that, if some years of life were granted to him, he might be so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his holy calling,

that no recreation in which he thought it not unfit to join would have such power over his mind.

CHAPTER XXII.

SATURDAY morning arrived, and the cousins went to church together. Charlotte's eye rested on Mrs. Riley's seat as she walked up towards their own pew, but Louisa was not visible there. They were, however, too early for this to be an indication that she did not mean to appear. The service began, and still Charlotte's head was occasionally turned to the spot where she expected to see her friend, but still she came not; and at last she thought it was too late even for Louisa Riley to venture to enter the church, and she endeavoured to catch Anna's eye and direct it to the empty seat; but her cousin's face was turned towards him, from whose lips she was listening to the Word of life, with an expression of earnest and wrapt attention that brought a blush of shame on Charlotte's cheek, as she reflected how dif-

ferently her own thoughts were at that moment occupied.

The short service ended, they passed from the church, Sir Edward, as usual, joined them at the door; they silently walked through the churchyard, and stood a moment without the hallowed precincts awaiting Arthur. Here they found the expected damsel; and ere she had finished explaining to Charlotte how cleverly she had managed in coming exactly at the right moment to the gate of the churchyard without being obliged to attend the service, Arthur was with them.

“ You must excuse me, Mr. Fosdyke,” said Louisa, assuming a half-penitent, half-coquettish look, “ for not making my appearance among the good ones of your parish this morning, according to my promise to dear Charlotte; but really you have the prayers so early, that it requires an immense effort to be present at them. I assure you I should be very happy to attend you if I were equal to it.”

“ Pray, Miss Riley,” replied Arthur gravely, “ do not apologize to me individually, as though your abstaining from joining in the prayers of my people, which

I daily offer to the throne of grace, were any slight to me. If you offer the excuse you have now made to me as to your pastor, wishing me to sanction your neglect of the duty by saying I consider it a sufficient one, you must forgive my telling you that I cannot do so; and that I think you are wrong in not making the effort that would bring you to the church at eight o'clock, however great and unusual it might be to you."

"But really," returned she, somewhat uncomfortable at the tone of his reply, "you do not know, you cannot tell how impossible it would be for me. I shall be quite ill all day, I am sure, from what I am doing now; only I could not resist dear Lotte's proposal to accompany her in one of her early walks, which she so raves about. I was singing such a lovely song yesterday after you left us, Lotte."

"We have not time to talk about new songs now, Louisa," said Charlotte. "Mama says we must begin to breakfast in more decent time, and we are only to take a short walk; so if you wish to speak to Arthur about his preaching at W—, you had better begin at once."

"Oh, true," said Louisa, rather shrinking

from the attack she had pledged herself to make; "we could not quite agree yesterday, Mr. Fosdyke, as to whether you had declined preaching for Mr. Listowel or not. I believe I was right in saying that you had been asked?"

"Quite right," replied Arthur; "but you were mistaken in supposing that I was going to do so. I begged to decline."

"Dear me! did you, indeed?" said Louisa, "Well, I confess I am surprised. Had you any reason, Mr. Fosdyke, for refusing?"

"Yes, I had a reason, certainly," replied Arthur, with a good-humoured smile, "or I should have been happy to have done what I was asked, particularly as I believe the invitation was meant as a kind one to a young clergyman just entering his ministerial career."

"May I ask your reasons, Fosdyke?" said Sir Edward. "I have no doubt they are right and consistent with your principles; but I confess I do not quite see the grounds on which you acted."

"I objected on two points, Belcomb," answered Arthur. "In the first place, I greatly disapprove of the system of getting strange clergymen to preach instead of the

appointed pastor of the people. Mr. Listowel is the appointed teacher of the people of W——, and not I; and in addressing them I should go out of the place assigned me by the Governor of the Church under whom I act. If it is supposed that more people would come to the church to hear me, or would listen more attentively to me because I am a stranger to them, and have no claim on their obedience, that is the greater reason for my keeping away from them, and not encouraging in them a very faulty, nay, sinful disposition."

"But, Arthur," inquired Charlotte, "should you think it wrong to ask another clergyman to preach a charity sermon for you, if you knew that he were a more eloquent man than yourself, and more likely, from being a stranger and from his style and manner being new to your congregation, to make an impression upon them, and secure a larger sum for the object you had in view?"

"Certainly," returned her brother. "I would rather obtain a smaller sum from my people offered in such a spirit as might enable us to hope the blessing of God might rest on their efforts, than see them moved by a mere eloquent appeal to their feelings to

give largely. The alms offered as the natural result of a spirit of self-denial, and given in an individual instance in obedience to a demand made by him who has 'the rule over them,' must be a more pleasing offering to God than money given from the momentary effect of a clever sermon. There are few things done professedly with a religious object, that I think more reprehensible than the collecting of money by objectionable means, such as penny and sixpenny subscriptions, ladies' bazaars, or clap-trap sermons from wandering clergymen. You may succeed by such means in gathering a certain sum for a special object, but the money which you thus call into action is not of the quality that 'is twice blessed;' 'it blesseth *not* him that gives,' supposing that it does 'him that takes.'

"But you were not asked to preach a charity sermon, Mr. Fosdyke," remarked Louisa.

"No," replied he, "but I was selected because I was a stranger to the W—— people, and it was supposed that a sufficiently large placard stuck about the town, with the words 'Sermon to be preached by the Rev. Arthur Fosdyke in the parish church of W——,'

would *draw*, as they say, a large congregation; and then an interesting paragraph would follow in the county newspaper next week, stating that a highly respectable and intelligent audience listened with gratifying attention to an eloquent discourse upon the previous Thursday. Can this be considered a legitimate use of a building consecrated to worship; or do you consider a parish priest so endeavouring to tickle the ears of people with whom he has no connexion is in his proper sphere?"

"You are quite right, Fosdyke," exclaimed Sir Edward. "I wish all clergymen would think and act with you in this respect. It would in some measure tend to teach us two things of which we are lamentably ignorant; the proportionate importance of prayer and preaching, and the real and proper connexion between pastor and people."

"Will you give us your other reason, Arthur, for objecting to preach at W——?" asked Anna.

"Willingly," said he; "though I am not quite sure of finding a supporter of my opinions in Belcomb. The sermon I was asked to preach on Thursday was to be addressed to a body of tee-totallers, who come

as such to the church, and expect their Vicar, who does not feel called upon to perform the service appointed by the Church on ordinary occasions, to do it at their request, and preach a sermon to them as tee-totallers. By consenting he recognises and sanctions a body held by a bond of union, of which the Church knows nothing."

"But, Arthur," cried Charlotte eagerly, "would you not wish to sanction anything in the lower classes that preserves them from so much that is vicious, and is not in itself wrong, like these tee-totalling unions?"

"I disapprove of these self-organized societies," replied he, "as they shew either an ignorance or a contempt of the society of which they are already members; the rules of which, if duly observed, are sufficient to preserve them from falling into vice."

"Of what society do you speak, Mr. Fosdyke?" asked Louisa, who had been silent longer than was usual or agreeable to her. "I know of none such established in W—, whatever may be the case elsewhere."

"I speak of the society, Miss Riley, of which we have all been made members in Holy Baptism," replied Arthur, "of the Church of Christ: we are all united in Christ,

why should we seek any other bond of union? We are all bound by the vows made at our baptism to Christ, under whose banner we are sworn soldiers; why should we need any further vows, made to sinners like ourselves, to engage us to forsake vice? If the Church held Her true position among us, and made Her censures to be felt, as well as Her blessings offered, men would not desire to form for themselves unauthorized unions. The more we endeavour by human contrivances to supersede the Church in Her right and natural functions, the less likely is the want of the watchful care with which She is able and willing to guard us to be felt, and the less likely are Churchmen of all classes to unite in desiring to see Her restored to Her full power over us. Belcomb, you do not agree with me. Where do you think I am wrong?"

"I am not sure," answered Sir Edward, "that I think you are right, in the absence of what is best, in rejecting what is good. I heartily wish the Church was what you think She might be, and had that hold for correction and punishment over those belonging to Her, that I believe She ought to have. But while this continues so far from being

the case, while there is so small a chance of Her recovering the strength and power, the absence of which some few deplore, had we not better attempt to do by other means a great and necessary work, which She is unable or not permitted to perform."

"Oh! thank you, Sir Edward," cried Charlotte, "for saying just what was in my thoughts; only I was afraid I should not make Arthur understand what I meant. If the Church cannot do what ought to be done, must we not try to get it done by some other means, even if we are obliged to confess those other means are only second best?"

"Your arguments sound plausible," returned Arthur; "but still they do not drive me from my opinion, which has been taken up after fully considering them. It seems to me a bad plan, if we have an excellent machine well calculated to perform its work, but which has been suffered by neglect and long disuse to get its wheels rusted and clogged with dust, to throw it aside, and fabricate for ourselves a new, and confessedly greatly inferior, machine, which it is acknowledged can only accomplish its object partially. I think it would be wiser to set all hands to

work to clear away all that interferes with the operations of the one we have, which we know cannot wear out, however its value may have been lessened in the eyes of some of us by its having been thrown aside for a century or two. Moreover, Edward, our machine is of a divine fabric, and all our substitutes are but human; and as we have in the Church a bond in which we must at our peril be united, and a discipline to which we are bound to submit ourselves in all cases where we are still fortunate enough to feel it exerted, I am not sure that such other bonds of union as we are speaking of are not more than inexpedient; they certainly ought to be unnecessary, and I think you will find that they have generally been felt to be so by persons possessing a strong feeling of deference to Church authority."

"Perhaps, Fosdyke," said Sir Edward, "you are more hopeful than I am with regard to our chance of seeing any real authority restored to the Church. I confess I despair of seeing anything effected in our time by way of improvement in that respect. I cannot look forward and see what future ages may bring forth; but I think Church feeling cannot fall lower, or rather more

generally disappear, than it has done in our day, nor do I see in the signs of the times much prospect of a reaction. Two or three years ago, if I had then thought at all on such matters, I believe I should have said otherwise; but the wholesome impulse that was then awakened among us, partly by circumstances, perhaps, but more by the efforts of some of the most holy and zealous of your profession, Arthur, seems now to be dying away, and a rebellious schismatical spirit to be springing up in its place, which is encouraged and fomented by the most unprincipled portion of the public press working upon the worst parts of our nature."

"Nay, Belcomb," replied Arthur, almost sadly, "I see but little room for hope in our visible condition; but I do not despair: we must not, we dare not, despair of the destinies of the Church, for we know that 'the gates of Hell shall not prevail against Her.' Perhaps you will tell me that this promise was given to the Church generally, and cannot be pleaded by us, if God threatens to remove our candlestick out of its place; which He will surely do, except we 'repent and do the first work,' for He surely must have more than 'somewhat against us.' But while

God grants to us nationally or individually time to repent, we ought not to despair; but rather earnestly and hopefully pray that we may have grace to use it. Assuredly we have no bright spot in our hemisphere, no anchor to hold by, but what is afforded by a trust in the infinite mercy of God. We know we have yet good and holy men among us, who pray fervently and constantly that He will be merciful to His own Sion; let us endeavour humbly to add to theirs our prayers, weak, and wavering, and scarcely worthy of the name, though we may feel them to be, and remembering that God would have spared Sodom if ten righteous men had been found within her walls, trust that the doom which we have deserved, and are still deserving, from His vengeance, may even yet be averted."

For awhile they walked on in silence, which was presently broken by Louisa, who said,

"I do not understand why you talk as if you were so dissatisfied with the way things are going on. I am sure some people take a very different view; people, I mean, who are quite friends to the Church. I heard Mrs. Bellerby talking about it the other

day; yesterday it was I told you, Charlotte, she came over from W—— with Laura Metcalfe, and she was saying how nicely they were all going on in W——: that there was no rancorous or ill-feeling between the different sects at all. She said she was present at a meeting of some sort, a missionary meeting I believe it was, and that all the different clergymen were there, and Mr. Listowel in the midst of them; all except the Catholic Priest."

" The only person, Miss Riley," said Arthur, " who has a right to that title in W—— is Mr. Listowel himself; and I beg I may not hear you give it to one whom we are bound to consider as a dissenter from the Church. With regard to the instance you have mentioned as showing the prosperous condition of the Church among us, and the hold She has over the feelings of the people, I must say that I need seek no greater proof of the reverse. What must we think of Her position among us, when those who should glory in being Her obedient sons term themselves Her *friends*, and endeavour to drag Her down from Her high position as the Spouse of Christ, to a level with the schismatical sects by which She is

surrounded? What a fatally erroneous notion does a person who has been made a member of the Church by Holy Baptism take of his position, when he professes himself a friend willing to support Her, instead of a son solemnly bound to obey Her! The single use of that word would suffice to shew me that the person using it had failed to appreciate the constitutions of the Church and his place within Her. Friends of the Church!" repeated he, almost to himself. "Yes, that is the extent to which Churchmanship now goes among us. Friends of the Church as long as the ordinances suit us, imperious dictators or ruthless oppressors of our Holy Mother when Her rule displeases us, and we have the power to resist Her! Such friendships never yet gave strength to the Church, or benefitted the souls of those who boasted of it."

They had now reached the gate of Fosdyke Lodge, and Louisa Riley and Sir Edward bade adieu to the trio who entered it—the one turning towards the Hall, and the other walking through the village which lay between her and her home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE little party at Chollerton were looking forward to another summer spent in the same sort of quiet country amusements which had afforded them so much enjoyment the year before; "*mais l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose.*" It was not to be. Anna received a letter from a Lady Featherston, a sister of her father's, whom she had never seen, but who now was the only near relation she possessed in the world. Upon the death of her mother, Miss Marsden had written to announce the fact to her aunt, and had in return received little more than a bare acknowledgment of her letter, with a cold request that she might be informed of her niece's arrangements with regard to her future residence as soon as they were formed. This conduct from so very near a connexion contrasted strongly with the warm-hearted invitation to consider Fosdyke Lodge as her home, and its possessors as her parents, which she received on the same day from her far-away cousins.

But Anna Marsden was not of a tempera-

ment to speak of this in conversation with others, or to allow her mind to rest upon it when alone. Having, therefore, suffered no resentful feelings towards her aunt to arise, she had none to subdue before she could resolve to obey the summons contained in the letter she had now received.

Lady Featherston had married early, and spent her life in the ordinary dissipations of a fine lady. She was a widow and childless, having still, at the time her brother's daughter was left an orphan, some pretensions to being thought attractive ; and she was resolved not to burden herself with the task of introducing to society a country-bred niece. But now Anna was apparently safely located at Chollerton, and openly considered as a member of Mr. Fosdyke's family, and therefore Lady Featherston thought she could run no very dangerous risk of not being able to shake her off again if she invited her to beguile the tedium of a few solitary months in the country, whither she had been sent for the benefit of her health. She had long denied the necessity of cutting herself off from all she valued in existence, and only consented to try what perfect retirement would effect, now that her medical

advisers thought it probable that she had resisted their recommendations too long, and that she was going into the country to die.

Anna, upon the receipt of Lady Featherston's letter, only remembered that she was her father's sister, and that she required her as a companion and nurse in sickness, and begged her guardian to allow her instantly to comply with the request. It was too clearly a duty for her to go for any of them to think of urging a word against it, but it would be difficult to say which among them felt the prospect of the separation most painfully.

Sir Edward was granted an indulgence he but very rarely obtained, an opportunity of saying a few words to her alone. His utmost eloquence was exerted in vain to induce her to permit their engagement to be openly announced before her departure. She gently but firmly reminded him that none existed between them.

“Eight months must still elapse,” said she, “before we must speak of an engagement. I leave Chollerton, I must confess, with regret; but, perhaps, I ought rather to rejoice at this additional opportunity of trying the stedfastness of our attachment. If it

cannot stand absence, Edward, it is not of a nature to render us happy through life."

"But, dearest Anna," exclaimed he, finding it useless to urge her to permit him to make his wishes known to Mr. Fosdyke, "you will let me write to you; you will receive and reply to my letters during this hateful absence for we know not how long."

"No, dear Edward," replied she, "you must not ask it. Indeed it is painful to me to refuse to grant your wishes, but you would not like to see me do what I think wrong."

"You do not mean to insist," cried he, impetuously, "that I am to remain here entirely separated from you, perhaps, for months—not permitted to follow you—bidden to write to you—bidden to mention your name!"

"No," said she, smiling, "I am not so rigorous as you imagine. If you remain at Chollerton you will be in the midst of my dearest friends, from whom you can hear constantly of my welfare, and of my daily routine of existence. Dear Lotte will, I am sure, want to talk to some one about me; and as Arthur will be too much occupied in his own affairs, she will be delighted to find a patient auditor in you."

“ You do not feel this separation as I do, Anna,” said Sir Edward, almost bitterly, “ or you could not jest about it. For months I have been used to find my chief, my only happiness in almost daily intercourse with you ; and now you bid me content myself with such casual accounts of you as I may accidentally receive from one who knows not that my whole soul is wrapt up in you.”

“ Do not speak in such wild language, Edward, or I must not listen to you,” returned Anna. “ Your whole soul should be devoted to higher thoughts than love for me. I should fear to hold a place in your heart, if I really believed it was the first place.”

“ Anna !” exclaimed he, “ you torture me with your calmness. I know not now, at this moment, if you really love me, and I cannot part from you on such terms as you prescribe without some stronger assurance from you. Do you love me, Anna, as I love you ?”

“ You are ungenerous, Edward !” returned she, endeavouring to preserve the calmness of which he complained. “ I told you months ago that I loved you ; and if you believed me then, you have seen nothing in me since

to shake your trust in my affection. We must part, and you must consent to my conditions. Let us say farewell now. I go to-morrow, and I would rather not see you again."

"Say that you forgive me, Anna," said Sir Edward, now all repentant for his vehemence—"say that you forgive me, even if you will not let me again hear you say that you love me. Do not leave me to remember that the last words I heard from your lips was an accusation of having treated you ungenerously. I will obey you, Anna, as exactly as I have done through the past eighteen months, and no man ever more religiously kept imposed conditions; only say that you forgive me, and that you will not permit absence to drive me from your thoughts."

"I more than forgive you, Edward," returned she, offering him her hand, which he eagerly took, and pressed to his lips. "I thank you much and sincerely," continued she, "for the manner in which you have hitherto complied with wishes that you have thought unreasonable. I trust you for the future, and I will not allow absence to drive you from my thoughts. Now, do not detain

me. Farewell, dearest Edward, and may God bless you."

She withdrew her hand, and was gone, almost before he could reply to her parting words; and months elapsed before he again saw her.

How tame and spiritless did everything at Chollerton then seem to him. She had led him to take a personal interest in the well-being of his tenants and dependants; she had taught him to dedicate a greater portion of his time than had previously been his practice to prayer and study. These duties still remained but the stimulus to the performance of them, which was supplied by the interest which she exhibited in his endeavours to promote the happiness of those around him, and the encouragement she afforded him in the execution of his numerous duties as a Christian and a land-owner, was withdrawn, and all seemed to him "stale, flat, and unprofitable." At first he thought he would leave a place so changed as Chollerton, and seek to beguile the time that hung so heavily on his hands by foreign travel; but the recollection that it was only by remaining where he was that he could hope to hear mention made of

Anna's name, or cause any intimation of him to reach her, chained him to the spot. This feeling, together with a disposition that was natural to him to continue a habit that had once been formed, took him as constantly to Fosdyke Lodge as had been his wont for the two last years. He still attended the early service in the church, for he felt the doing so was a tie to Anna. She it was who had induced him at first to do so, and he doubted not but that she now heard from Charlotte that her influence over him was still remembered. He still accompanied Arthur and his sister to the gate of their house after the service was concluded; and on those days when Arthur returned to the Rectory, he still gave an arm to Charlotte, though the other could no longer be offered to her friend. He still often joined her in her walks, and attended her in her rides; he was still a frequent guest at the dinner-table at the Lodge, and still more frequently he made his appearance at their luncheon hour. All went on as usual—the only change was Anna's absence.

Can we be surprised, then, if Charlotte began to think—what she had before scarcely permitted herself to hope—that it was in-

deed herself that formed the attraction to him? She had struggled too constantly and too successfully to conceal from every eye the alternating hopes and fears that had tormented her through the long months that had passed since Anna's first residence among them, for any one, even her own fond watchful mother, to discover that her spirits were unequal, and that her merry laugh was often feigned to cover a heavy heart; but now the hope that she was beloved by one who had touched her fancy and occupied her thoughts from her earliest childhood, long, long before she could know the meaning of the feeling that caused her eye to dance more brightly and her heart to beat more joyously; now this new-born hope, springing up after she had well-nigh quenched it, lent a brilliance to her beauty, and a sparkling gaiety to her manner that charmed all who saw her; aye, all who saw her, even he whose conduct so unwittingly produced it.

Among those who had watched the passing events of the last two years, Arthur was the only one who had from the first perceived how Sir Edward and Anna were situated with regard to each other. Sud-

denly he had been struck with the conviction that she was beloved by his friend, and soon after he had successfully struggled against and subdued the sentiment in his own heart, that had given so clear a power of vision to his eyes, he became aware that she returned the attachment she had inspired, and that though for some reason no engagement subsisted between them, yet that they mutually understood each other. Had he been equally clear-sighted now, he would have perceived, that however innocent in intention Sir Edward might be, yet much suffering must necessarily result from his conduct. How he would have acted in this case we need not attempt to say; in truth, he would have found some difficulty himself in determining what would have been most wise and right to do, but, fortunately for him, fortunately, perhaps, for all parties, he saw nothing of what was going on.

Soon after Miss Marsden's departure from Chollerton took place, much sickness prevailed in the parish, and Arthur found more numerous and more urgent claims upon his time even than usual. An idea then began to obtain that the illness from which so

many were suffering was of a contagious nature, and as he spent the greater part of his time in passing from one sick-bed to another, he thought it would be the safer plan to have as little intercourse with his family as might be. This circumstance contributed, in a great measure, to keep him in the dark as to his friend's manœuvres. Uninterrupted, then, by those who had a right to ask to know what were his wishes and his views, and unconscious of the remarks of those who had no such right, days and weeks passed on and grew into months, without Sir Edward's own thoughts being awakened to the consequences of his conduct.

By degrees Chollerton again charmed him; his time no longer hung listlessly on his hands. It was not necessary for Charlotte to speak of Anna for him to find his attention engrossed; he listened to Charlotte's songs; he watched her sparkling eyes; he gazed with admiration on her light figure as he followed it on horse-back, or in the dance; he gaily laughed in return for the bright sallies that came forth with increased animation, when he was by to hear them; and he again was as happy and per-

haps more gay, than when he took his tone from Anna's mind, and strove to participate in those higher hopes on which her thoughts so generally rested.

Had he then so soon forgotten her, whom he had so earnestly desired to pledge himself to love through life unto death? Had he taught her to feel for him an affection intense and genuine as belonged to her truthful character, and then ceased to think of her, as soon as circumstances withdrew her from the daily intercourse in which their love had sprung up? No! he had not yet forgotten her; he imagined she still held in his heart the place he had consecrated to her. It was his love for her that had first made him draw near to her friend. She was the theme of their conversation, the link that united him to her; then the habit was contracted, and with Sir Edward habit was all powerful, and it bound him with a chain the more strong the less it was felt. Ere long he became aware that he found an attraction and a charm in Charlotte's society that none other afforded him; but even the consciousness of this did not awaken him to his danger. The feeling with which he regarded Charlotte was so different to that

which he had entertained for Anna, that he could not call it love; it was admiration—friendship perhaps—anything but love, if, indeed, the former feeling merited the name; but whether that former feeling really were love was a question which he had not yet asked himself.

And now Charlotte no longer so strenuously endeavoured to conceal from view the sentiment she had so long struggled to subdue. She doubted not that in a few weeks—short happy weeks—devoted to the pleasant task of strengthening his interest in her heart, Sir Edward would tell her a tale which would be nearly the history of his life as her love for him would make the history of hers.

Her mother, who had now been noticing his looks and tones for months, was at last fully convinced that her daughter was the wife he sought; and Charlotte already knew that the choice she had made was warmly sanctioned by both her parents.

Sir Edward was not a vain man, far from it. In spite of all the attractions he possessed, both personally and as attached to his position in the county, which his old title, good blood, high connexions, and large

property rendered considerable, he had hitherto remained unattacked by match-making mothers and anxious aunts. He was still a very young man, and the time that had passed over him since he attained his majority had been divided between a hasty sight-seeing tour on the Continent and the two years that the influence of Anna Marsden had induced him to spend at Chollerton. Society, therefore, the society of the metropolis, and of those who haunt it, had not spoilt him, and he was perhaps as unlikely as any man breathing to imagine that he had created a fancy where none had been produced, or to attribute to love what only proceeded from a general warm-hearted kindness of manner. Nevertheless he began now to suspect that Charlotte Fosdyke was not altogether indifferent to him. What were his sensations when first he marked her colour come and go as he approached her? When he felt her hand tremble as he took it, and heard her voice falter when she spoke to him? In truth, they were too varied to be described, too confused to be defined. At one moment he thought upon the vows he had pledged to another, and deeply lamented that such a consequence

should have followed from his thoughtless devotion to her; the next, something almost of pleasure was produced by perceiving that he had, though most assuredly without seeking to do so, obtained an influence over her which he had never possessed over Anna. She it was who had led him; but though he yielded to her stronger mind and more developed character while he remained in constant intercourse with her, he was not insensible to the pleasure now, for the first time, felt by him, and which is so generally appreciated by his sex, of guiding and being looked up to by a woman who loved him. Then he would endeavour recklessly to drive all thoughts connected with the subject from his mind, and resolve to let things take their chance while he stood by and awaited the result.

Sir Edward did not acknowledge to his own heart that he was thus allowing himself to trifle with feelings that must either produce happiness or misery through life; but finding himself in a painful predicament when he considered his position, and that the passing hours were all that was delightful when he banished thought, he often did so as effectually as he could by repeating to him-

self that his attachment to Anna was as devoted as it had ever been, and that it was not possible that Charlotte cared for him, otherwise than as for an old friend valued from childhood, and that to permit himself to think otherwise was a degree of coxcombry equally foreign to his disposition, and unworthy of him.

And Anna: how were these days and weeks, that were flying by thus pleasantly at Chollerton, occupied by her? She found her aunt a prematurely worn-out lady of fashion, reduced by illness to a state of great feebleness, and unaccustomed from the habits of her previous life to find amusement or solace in any of the few enjoyments or consolations that were now left to her. A naturally fretful temper was now rendered more so by suffering and weakness, and the ennui resulting from an almost total want of occupation. The prospect of passing perhaps months as the sole companion of such a person was not cheering, especially as Anna could feel no tie to her but that of duty. Happily with her that was sufficient to make her undertake the charge cheerfully, and fulfil it patiently. Hour after hour, day after day, she gently bore all her

peevish murmurings and fretful complaints, only seeking to relieve the sufferings, and amuse the mind of her poor patient. It constantly happened that Anna's most devoted watchfulness and utmost care could not prevent her from giving umbrage; everything she suggested was wrong, everything she said an impertinence, everything she did an offence. But this disapprobation of her nursing brought her no relief; for if she ever, in despair of being able to please her aunt, attempted to resign her for a time to the care of her servants, she was again immediately summoned to her side with the most earnest entreaties that she would not forsake and abandon her; but no sooner did Lady Featherston find her request granted, and that Anna had resumed her constant attendance upon her, than the same complaints and upbraiding began, and with unwearying sweetness were they borne.

The contrast between Anna's present existence and her life during the last two years at Chollerston was certainly great. There she was in the midst of attached and admiring friends, and every circumstance of her daily routine was pleasurable. Without reproof or difficulty she had the happiness

of beginning each day by dedicating it publicly to God in the Service of His Church; then followed her pleasant morning occupations, shared by a dear friend; then an hour or two, securing a blessing upon the others, by being bestowed in giving instruction, advice, and assistance to those who had nothing to offer in return but their prayers; and then a short time, on which nothing ever was permitted to break in, devoted to her own private religious exercises; and, together with all this, a sufficient intercourse with society to interest her mind, and keep it united with the world in which she lived, without its being enough to fill her heart, or distract it from higher contemplations. From Mrs. Fosdyke she received more motherly tenderness than she had ever met with from her own mother. In Arthur she found a guide and pastor to whom she could have recourse for advice and instruction with as much confidence and ease as had formerly been the case with her old friend at Langley, and from his lips she had the blessing, and she acknowledged it to be such, of hearing many a warning, and sometimes a reproof, which guarded her from the dangerous influences of so very delightful an existence;

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and though last, not least, she had the happiness of beholding the attachment she had inspired in one to whom her young heart was given with its whole power of love, and of thinking that she was being, under God, the means of teaching him to have a higher and holier aim in life than he had found before. The change was doubtless great.

The place Lady Featherston had taken for the summer was a pretty cottage in a retired part of Devonshire, whither she had been recommended to go for the sake of the reputed mildness of the air. It was five miles from the town in which resided the medical man under whose immediate care Lady Featherston had placed herself, and his periodical visit, returning every other day, gave them the only pleasure she derived from mixing with her fellow-creatures. There was no clergyman resident in the parish, the Sunday duty being performed by a gentleman living a few miles distant. Soon after their arrival he had called upon them, but Lady Featherston not being well enough on that occasion to receive a visiter, he left a card bearing the name of Mr. Frederick Tenderden, and no more was seen of him except by Anna in church every Sunday morning;

and as he lost no time by reading the service unnecessarily slowly, and did not detain his congregation by a lengthy sermon afterwards, she did not see much of him there. Fast-days and festivals were equally unmarked, and the Holy Communion administered but three times in the year.

Anna's domestic enjoyments were no less curtailed than her spiritual blessings. Lady Featherston did not like to be disturbed early in the morning, and this enabled her to devote, in her solitary bed-room in Devonshire, the same hour to the purpose that would have occupied it in the Church at Chollerton. Her time was then given entirely to her aunt, till an hour's repose that she took about three o'clock permitted her to breathe the fresh air. This, which she soon learnt to value as a great indulgence, enabled her to resume her place by her aunt's sofa at four; and with the exception of half an hour's leisure, which she made a point of obtaining for her evening reading and prayer, she remained stationed by her side, reading, talking, singing, or listening to her, till the welcome sound of the time-piece striking half-past ten sent her, wearied in body and in spirit, to her bed.

Yes, the change was great; but Anna bore it well. At times, it is true, she was oppressed and subdued as she thought of the dearly-loved home she had left, and found all her efforts at soothing her wayward relative ineffectual and unthankfully accepted, and all her attempts to lead her to think of another world scornfully thrown back upon her; but then she remembered that this life cannot safely be made one of unvarying tranquil enjoyment, and that those who hope to be found fit to rise with Christ hereafter must rejoice at being permitted daily to bear the Cross here; and then she thanked her Almighty Father, who alone knew what discipline was needful for her, that He had vouchsafed with the trial to give her strength to bear it unrepiningly. Tranquilly and contentedly she trod the path where duty placed her, finding her greatest solace, as far as this world's pleasure was concerned, in Charlotte's constantly long letters, and her greatest grief in the resolute manner in which Lady Featherston refused to allow her to speak on the only topic that can bring real consolation to a sick-room.

The entire summer was passed by Anna in the manner described, but at last her

release came painfully and unexpectedly. Her aunt, who had continued the whole time in much the same state — one day rather better, and the next somewhat more suffering — suddenly grew worse ; and before Anna could obtain additional medical advice, or summon any friend to her assistance, Lady Featherston was no more.

Her situation for a few days was most sad. Alone, with the exception of the servants, in the house of death, without even an acquaintance near her to whom she could turn for comfort in her distress ; but her letter to Chollerton, announcing the death of her aunt, was answered sooner than she had believed it possible a letter from the north could have reached her in Devonshire, by Mr. Fosdyke in person. Thankfully did she receive him, and grateful indeed did she feel for the fatherly kindness that had brought him from such a distance to her side.

He was sufficiently shocked at the change a few months had wrought in her to rejoice at being able to carry her without delay from the place which had produced it. She was always pale, but the constant fatigue she had undergone in nursing, and the wear and

tear of spirits she had endured, had rendered her even paler than was customary with her, and caused her slight figure to lose much of its former roundness.

Again she entered Chollerton in deep mourning, and now Charlotte received her with a joy that was only equalled by what was felt by Anna at returning to the place she now considered her home.

Little did those two affectionate girls think, as they eagerly threw their arms around each other, that the happiness of either was incompatible with that of her friend; little was Anna aware that she, to whom she so rejoiced to be again united, had won from her the heart of which her proudest thought was to feel herself the mistress; and little was Charlotte conscious that she had done her dearest friend so deep an injury.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN spite of the fatigue which she still felt after her journey, Anna Marsden was up and prepared to accompany Charlotte to their morning service. She had not yet seen either Arthur or Sir Edward. The thought of her meeting with them both had occupied her mind for some hours during the journey of the preceding day. In Arthur Fosdyke she was to meet the authorized guide and pastor from whose advice and ministration she had been so long removed. How many impatient murmurings in which she had permitted her spirits to indulge, unknown to all but herself and God, had then occurred to her memory. Had she been under his care he would have marked and reproved them. Would he not now perceive that her temper was injured by a trial which she feared she had not borne as she ought? If it were so, he would not fail to point it out to her, and with a gentleness that rendered more effective the almost stern plainness of his rebukes: though she longed, she almost dreaded, to be again sub-

jected to his constantly felt though mild authority.

In meeting with Sir Edward, Anna anticipated unmixed pleasure. With one, the outward expression of whose feelings was so well under control as with her, the necessity of receiving him without exhibiting all the tenderness and joy she felt was not worthy of being called a drawback to her expected happiness. They so well understood each other, a glance would explain—if explanation between them could be needed—all that was passing in the mind of the other. She had not expected to see either of them on the first evening of her arrival. Arthur, she knew, would not be there, as it was on a fast-day that she came; and not even to welcome her home among them would he break through a rule, in his opinion imposed by the Church; and as her friends knew not the right Sir Edward had to rejoice in her return, he, of course, would not be there. Their absence, therefore, was not a disappointment, but still without them Fosdyke Lodge could not be considered in its very fullest dress.

And now, as she approached the church, she said to Charlotte—

“I am glad, Charlotte, that I did not see Arthur last night. I shall now see him first as I best love to think of him—as a priest among us; and Sir Edward,” added she, naming him with an effort a moment after, “you have not spoken of him yet. Shall I see him this morning? Does he continue to attend the service as regularly as he used to do?”

“Oh, yes; you will certainly see him,” replied Charlotte. “He rarely misses, and surely to-day he would come if only that he might shake hands with you.”

Anna sighed as she thought whether it really was more the thought of her than any better feeling that first caused and had still continued his attendance at their daily worship. It was well they had reached the church-yard gate, as Anna had no wish to reply to her cousin’s words.

Shall we blame her very severely, if it must be admitted, that, as she walked up the church, her eye was for a moment turned towards his seat? He was not there. Hastily she passed on and gained their pew. During the few moments that elapsed before Arthur took his place in the reading-desk, she struggled to command her wandering

thoughts; but even after the service had commenced, the sound of a step arrested her attention, and her head was again turned towards a distant part of the sacred building; but at that instant the deep earnest tone of Arthur's voice, as he told them that they were most chiefly bound humbly to acknowledge their sins before God, when they were assembled and met together, to render thanks for the great benefits they had received at His hands, recalled her to a sense of the place she was in, and the duty that had brought her there; and, with a strong effort, she drove all other thoughts from her mind; and was enabled, with a pure heart and humble voice, to accompany him in the confession and prayers that followed.

She left the church ignorant whether Sir Edward had been there or no. Not so Charlotte. They had no sooner passed the porch over the door, than she whispered hastily—“He was not there. Sir Edward was not at church.”

“Hush, dearest,” said Anna, laying her hand on Charlotte's arm gently, to enforce her recommendation to silence while they remained within the consecrated precincts, while the thought occurred to her, suggested

by her cousin's eagerness, that possibly Sir Edward had been induced to disregard her injunctions to secrecy for the sake of enjoying unreserved talk about her with her most intimate friend. She could not resolve to be very angry with him even if he had done so, but why was he not there? Why had he broken through an accustomed rule, when, by adhering to it, he must have had an opportunity of seeing her? Perhaps he did not wish that their first meeting should be witnessed by Arthur, who was sure to be present, and more likely, perhaps, than others of the family to be keenly observant. Doubtless that was his reason, but it ought not to have been sufficient, she thought; and a shade rested on her pale face as, after a few moments waiting, Arthur joined them.

Warm and cordial was the welcome he gave her, though the smile with which he greeted her passed from his countenance as he observed the change that was so visible in her; but he suppressed an expression of regret that rose to his lips, as the thought occurred to him that it was an evidence that she had well and unshrinkingly performed the duty that she had found allotted to her.

If she had lost something of her beauty, and of her look of youth and health by so doing, he could not mourn it.

“How I rejoice, dear Anna,” said he, placing the hand she had extended to him within his arm, “at again having you among us, and not too much fatigued with your journey to be here this morning. I confess I should have been disappointed not to have seen you in your accustomed place, but remembering the distance you have so rapidly accomplished, I thought it possible you might not feel equal to it.”

“The ease of railway travelling,” replied she, “now leaves one no such excuse, even if one wished for it; but in truth I have too much prized the blessing that is afforded us here not to take advantage of it the moment it was again offered to me.”

“It is indeed a blessing,” returned Arthur; “that must, I think, be deeply missed by those who have once participated in it. I have now been here long enough to judge, and it is remarkable how very rarely any of those are absent who once have adopted the practice of attending the Service.”

“One was absent this morning, though,” said Charlotte, “who is generally pretty

regular in his attendance. I wonder where Sir Edward is?"

"That is true," returned Arthur, "I had not remarked it. Anna, you make me oblivious as a friend and neglectful as a pastor. I always require a reason from those of my little morning congregation whom I miss, and in my pleasure at seeing you I had forgotten that Belcomb had not appeared."

Anna blushed as she thought that she should like to hear what reason he would assign; but as she could neither jest nor yet answer seriously, she remained silent.

"You must keep yourself quiet to-day, Anna," continued Arthur, "but next week you must resume your old habits. I have got black looks from many a cottage where I expected to be received with a smile, from saying that I could not tell how soon you were to return; and the last day or two I have been determined to make myself welcome everywhere by spreading the report of your intended arrival, so you will find yourself expected."

Anna forced herself to reply, and was soon interested in the accounts Arthur gave of many of her poor neighbours, nevertheless she was glad when their walk was con-

cluded, and that she found her silence at the breakfast table attributed to the fatigue naturally consequent upon her journey. This excuse also enabled her to spend some portion of the day in the quiet of her own room, and she found the doing so a great relief; nevertheless she thought she had purchased a tranquil hour or two somewhat dearly when, upon her return to the drawing-room, she was told that Sir Edward had called, but that Mrs. Fosdyke, hoping she was asleep, would not allow her to be disturbed.

The following day was Sunday, and then Anna thought the long-expected meeting must take place, and in the most disagreeable manner possible, in a crowd at the church-door; but it could not be avoided, and she therefore endeavoured to dislike it and to think of it as little as she could. At last the moment she had longed for came, and for an instant her hand rested within that of Sir Edward's; she was conscious of the same pressure that had so often before expressed what he felt, but dared not speak. She did not venture to look at him, fearing others beside himself might read what her eyes would say. He seemed flurried and unlike himself in his manner,

but that was not surprising under the circumstances, and as it was impossible for him to address a single word to her apart, she sympathized with the wish to escape from the party, which, as she thought, led him to say to Arthur as he appeared from the church before they had separated,

“Fosdyke, may I walk with you as far as the Rectory? I wish to have a few moments' talk with you.”

These words were also heard by Charlotte, and they caused her heart to beat a little faster than was agreeable. Was it to Arthur that her lover wished first to mention his attachment? That it was rather a singular moment for him to choose for making such a disclosure did not at that instant strike her. But though Charlotte was more nearly right than her cousin in her general estimate of the present state of Sir Edward's heart, yet upon this occasion it was Anna who rightly interpreted his sudden desire for a little conversation with the rector. He felt very uncomfortable while standing with Anna Marsden on one side of him and Charlotte Fosdyke on the other, and he took the earliest method that presented itself of getting away.

Once, twice, and now for the third time, he had escaped the interview with Anna that he dreaded; but he knew that such cowardly shrinking from what was painful to him could not avail. The time had now come when it was absolutely necessary that he should examine and discover the real state of his feelings. The different efforts that he had made, almost unconsciously, to defer the meeting to which at one time he had looked forward with such anxious desire, awakened in him a clearer comprehension of his sentiments than he had before arrived at. How should he act was now the question, and he found it a most difficult one to answer. That Charlotte loved him he could not doubt, neither could he help avowing to himself, though the confession was made with contempt and detestation for his own fickleness, that he loved her with a fervour that he had never felt towards her cousin. Oh that it were possible for him to believe that time and absence, those great triers of a slight attachment, had obliterated his image from Anna's heart! but no, he could not solace himself by thinking that it was so. In the one glance that he had ventured to give her while he held her hand that

morning he had seen the same expression of quiet trustful love that he had been used to think so beautiful and prize so highly. How should he speak to her when they met without observers? How should he conceal from her his present feelings for Charlotte? Should he feign a love he no longer felt, and render Charlotte miserable by the act that sealed his own wretchedness; or should he confess to Anna that the heart which had ever been unworthy of her was now given to another? These were painful questions to answer, but they could be no longer driven from his mind. They now possessed him too entirely to allow his thoughts to be turned into any other current; and after parting from Arthur at the door of the Rectory, he plunged into the most secluded part of Fairfield Dean, and there strolled about unconscious of the passing time; nor did he leave it until long past the hour for the afternoon service.

“Arthur’s reproof, if administered as he intended this morning,” said Charlotte to her cousin, as they walked home from church together, “has not produced much beneficial effect upon our friend. He was not at church again. I meant to have asked

him to ride with us to the Priory to-morrow. Should you not like to go to some of your old haunts, Anna?"

"Yes, very much," replied her friend; "but I must not go to-morrow, nor for the next few days. Do you not remember what Arthur said yesterday about so many of my poor old friends in the village wishing to see me, and that I must go to them before I do anything else?"

"I am afraid," said Charlotte, "I have not been so constant in visiting them this summer as I used to be when you were with us. Arthur has more than once spoken to me about it; but I scarcely think I attend to him so much as you seem still inclined to do."

"I am sorry for it, dearest Lotte," returned Anna, "I am sure it is your duty to obey all his injunctions. I do not mean as your brother, but in deference to his pastoral authority."

"I wish he had no pastoral authority at all," said Charlotte. "Do not look so much shocked, Anna," continued she, "I only mean I wish he had never gone into the Church. He thinks of nothing but his parish duties, and is almost as much sepa-

rated from us as if he did not live among us."

"How could you wish him a better or higher occupation, Lotte?" asked Anna, "Can you think of the good he does in his parish, the comfort he administers to the sick and afflicted, the example his life affords to those in his own station, the holy round of duties to which he so entirely devotes himself, and then wish that he should have chosen any other position? If I had a brother, my highest ambition would be to see him such as Arthur is. But Lotte," added she, "did Arthur never tell you not to use that common phrase 'gone into the Church'? Do not you see that by it you imply that the Clergy only form the Church, and exclude us of the laity from our greatest blessing and highest privilege? We all went into the Church, or, rather, were admitted into it, at our baptism."

"I see," returned Charlotte, "that you are as particular about using certain expressions as ever. I admit that the phrase to which you object is incorrect; but then you know it is very common."

"But you must remember, Lotte," replied her cousin, "that the only way of rendering

it less common is for individuals to give up the habit of using it. Some persons, I am aware, think it absurd to lay a stress upon what they consider so trifling as the right or wrong use of a word; but we should not do so if we remembered that after relinquishing the word, we too often lose the thing. We have permitted the holy title of Catholic to be taken from us; nay, we too often reject it with contumely ourselves, till now, perhaps, we scarcely think how imperative upon us is the necessity that we should be Catholics; and we have talked of Priests alone as being in the Church, till we have almost ceased to consider that we are ourselves in the Church also."

"I believe you are right," replied Charlotte, "and I know Arthur quite agrees with you; but you must confess it is difficult to break a habit of that sort. Do you remember what he said about that one day, soon after you came? I never call people Pu—, names I mean, now," added she, stopping herself on the very verge of committing the fault she was boasting of having conquered.

CHAPTER XXV.

IT is needless to follow Sir Edward in his numerous varying attempts to discover and pursue what was now the right line of conduct; but unfortunately he had placed himself in such a position, that there was no right course for him to follow. Miserable and undecided, one day his real feelings towards Charlotte involuntarily betrayed themselves; the next he endeavoured to speak to and look at Anna as he had been wont to do; and the third he sought equally to absent himself from both. It was impossible for Anna to fail to observe his continually changing manner.

For a day or two it puzzled and distressed her; but she had not found the true key to its interpretation. Charlotte's restless and abstracted deportment afforded her the clue she sought; and the moment she conceived the idea that Sir Edward was beloved by her, all that was before mysterious became only too intelligible.

It was at the close of an evening, after

some of the party who had been dining at the Lodge had already left them, that the real feelings of her two friends became known to her. One glance of Sir Edward's eye; as it rested on Charlotte, one intonation in his voice, as he addressed her, suddenly enlightened her. For an instant she closed her eyes, as if she would shut out the unwelcome light that had fallen upon her mind; then she remembered where she was, how necessary it was that she should command herself, and felt thankful that the effort would be needed but for a few short moments, and that in the solitude of her own room, which she would so soon reach, she might, unobserved, think of that look and tone, and of all they meant.

Quietly, but almost unconsciously, she answered some trifling observation made by the person next her; and then, unaware of what she was about, she extended her hand, and her adieux were as courteously made, and her parting bow as gracefully given, as if she had been conscious that she was going through the routine society demanded.

The effort she made to arouse herself, as Sir Edward approached from the side of Charlotte to wish her good night, produced

a flush upon her cheek which hid the almost ashy paleness of her countenance. Perhaps her hand shook as she gave it him; but he was so used to find his own tremble now as it held hers, that he noticed it not, and he left her without knowing that all his fickleness was discovered, and all his misery guessed by her.

We must not follow her into the retirement of her bed-chamber, and endeavour to describe her feelings, as one by one incidents of the last few days, that had passed by at the time unmarked or misunderstood, 'rose before her mind, each more and more confirmatory of what now seemed so clear to her. Neither need we tell how resolutely she struggled to subdue her first inclination to murmur against this unexpected and most severe trial. Hard, indeed, she found it to bring herself to feel that it was sent in mercy, and to say in humble acquiescence, "Thy will be done." But she had already been taught by adversity that the only real consolation afforded us in sorrow is to be met with in prayer; and she earnestly implored that she might be made to acknowledge that this stroke was the merciful chastisement of a heavenly Father, sent to pre-

serve, or perhaps wean her from the sin of a too engrossing earthly attachment.

Suffice it to say, that after a sleepless and more painful night than in all her former sorrows she had ever known, she rose, and carried with her to church a spirit humbled and contrite, but perfectly resigned and acquiescent in the providence of God, which had seen fit to deprive her of what she had trusted to as the prop and happiness of her life.

Anna's chief object now was to secure an opportunity of conversing with Sir Edward without fear of interruption. This had always been a matter difficult to accomplish, but now that he appeared bent upon avoiding it, she found it more so than ever; but she felt so desirous that an explanation should take place between them without delay, that she could not wait till a happy chance should afford her what she sought. Anything was preferable to permitting their present tone to continue an hour longer than was absolutely necessary; and though finding it required even a greater effort than she expected, she forced herself to say to him in a whisper unheard by her cousin, as they were parting from him at their own gate,

“Join me after breakfast in the west avenue.”

She waited for no reply, or she might even then have been pained at perceiving how disturbed he appeared to be at her request.

The appointment, however, was kept. They met in the avenue; and declining his offered arm, she walked in silence by his side till they reached the arbour which had been the scene of the first avowal of his attachment two years since.

“You must not seek to shun me, Edward,” said Anna gently, as she seated herself upon the rude bench inside the little arbour, and pointed to the spot where she wished him to place himself. “I hope it is not very disagreeable to you, but I much wish to have half an hour’s conversation with you.”

“Shun you, Anna!” exclaimed he; “can you think me capable of wishing to shun you?”

“Nay, dear Edward,” replied she in the same tone, “let us speak candidly and openly to each other, as we were once wont to do, as such true friends as we must ever be should always speak; and do not, I beseech you, grieve me by saying one word your

heart does not entirely ratify. You cannot deceive me even if you would, and I would fain believe you do not desire to do so."

"Not for all the world could offer," exclaimed Sir Edward; "not if I could by so doing recover your esteem, Anna, dear as that is to me, would I speak untruthfully to you. Say to me what you will, you have a right to bid me listen to you; and believe me, that miserably weak and wicked as I am, nothing shall tempt from me one palliating falsehood. You may believe me, Anna, for I never—mark my assertion—I *never* yet spoke falsely to you."

A slight blush mantled on her pale cheek, and gradually spread itself over her whole face, and then as gradually died away, as she listened to these last words, and replied—

"I believe you, Edward; and at this moment, which must be painful to us both, my firm conviction that all you ever said to me was true, must be to both our greatest comfort. But it was not on past times that I meant to speak," continued she. "Do not detain me longer than is necessary for what must be said. You have ceased to love me, Edward, and that being the case I ought to

be thankful. Nay, I am thankful for many reasons that I have been able so clearly to see it. Here, in the same spot that you first assured me of your regard, do I return you all the promises you ever made to me. Nay, promises they should not be called, for I never accepted them as such. Remember, Edward, we parted free. Most thankful do I feel now, that in the midst of much that was unwise, much that was wrong in my conduct, I always persisted in refusing to let any engagement subsist between us. Edward, remember you break no faith to me."

"Oh, Anna!" exclaimed he, starting from his seat, and standing before her, "you destroy me with kindness so undeserved. I was bound to you—our hearts were pledged, if we were unfettered by spoken vows. If you had given your heart to another I should have upbraided you with being false as well as fickle. No suggestions of my own, no words of yours can conceal from me my own baseness. Oh! why did you ever leave us? Had you remained by my side to strengthen and support me, my heart had never strayed. We had both been happy, and I had not been worthless."

“Not so, dear friend,” replied Anna; “you should rejoice with me that my temporary absence has proved what we both should otherwise, perhaps, have found out too late to profit by the discovery, that your love for me was not of a nature to give happiness to either of us. Do not too severely condemn yourself for having fancied that sincere regard was the same as love.” She paused a moment, and then added, with a voice that all but imperceptibly trembled—“I think—I trust that our dear Charlotte returns your affection. May Heaven grant that you may, through life, share each other’s sorrows, and form each other’s joys.”

“Impossible,” returned Sir Edward, sadly; “even if I knew it were as you suggest, how dare I offer to her the same vows I have pledged and broken to her friend? No; rather would I implore to be permitted to devote myself to your happiness. If united to you, I might watch over your welfare; and by endeavouring to dedicate to you every thought, and atone for the injury I have already done, I might hope to regain some tranquillity. But you would scorn such a devotion; nay, I see I have offended you by naming it.”

“Nay,” answered Anna; “you mistake me. I do not scorn you, nor am I offended. At present you cannot clearly see your own position, or justly appreciate your duty. If, as I suspect, Charlotte is attached to you, you are bound to devote yourself to her, and you may do so without any remorse for having destroyed my happiness. I do not say this—you would not believe me if I did—meaning to imply that I have not loved you. I loved you too well. I loved the creature above the Creator, and the sin has met its appropriate punishment. I can now thank God for this merciful chastisement. When I first perceived that your heart was given to another, I will not conceal from you that I felt it deeply. I murmured against God’s good providence, and then first discovered that my love for you had been sinful. I was not willing to leave all things in the hand of God. I desired to be happy my own way; but the very excess of my suffering by God’s grace wrought my cure, and now I can sincerely say I am glad, I am thankful for what seemed to be a great affliction. Will you not rejoice with me, my dear friend, that I have been rescued from a great danger—nay, withdrawn from a great sin?”

“ I ought to rejoice, Anna, that you should be awakened from a folly beneath you—that of loving, in any degree, one so unworthy of you as myself. I cannot but believe that, despising me as I know you do, you must have already ceased to love me. If I could see you giving and receiving such happiness as you merit in the affection of one greatly more deserving of you than I ever was, I might still be happy. Once an idea tortured me from which I could now derive comfort. I feared one loved you with whom I felt I could not be compared. I thought Arthur —”

“ Name him not ! ” exclaimed Anna, hastily. “ At such a time as this his thoughts, his best affections are fixed on objects far higher than any this world can offer ; and do not imagine,” continued she, again colouring slightly, “ that I can know any second attachment—women rarely love twice. I do not say this to increase any regret you now feel, but to prevent you from clinging and looking forward to an event which can never take place ; and now farewell for the present. Let no one know what has passed between us, but let us always remain in appearance, what I trust we are in reality, warm and true friends.”

“Stay one moment, *Anna!*” cried Sir Edward, but she was gone ere the words had passed his lips.

Sir Edward’s first sensations, upon being left alone, were sufficiently painful, his only consolation being derived from an unfeigned conviction that, in truth, he was altogether unworthy of the affection of her who had just released him from the chain his own lips had forged, and which had lately bound him down to so much from which he wished to be free.

Free he now was, and no obstacle existed to prevent him from at once seeking Charlotte, and confessing his attachment to her, and, as he strongly suspected, hearing her assure him that it was returned. No obstacle but what his own feelings supplied; but these suggested ones that were overpowering, and which he at present thought no time could overcome. He had again thrown himself upon the seat of the summer-house after *Anna* disappeared, and there he remained, taking counsel with himself for he knew not how long—now lamenting that he had not better guarded his secret, and succeeded in concealing from *Anna* the change time and absence had wrought in his fickle disposition,

and then hating himself as he felt a slight sensation of relief stealing over him at the partial disengagement in his affairs that had taken place. At one moment the idea of taking instant flight towards the Continent suggested itself as the best mode of extricating himself from the difficulties that still remained; and the next he remembered, with an inclination to bow to her decision, that Anna had assured him that his chief duty now was to dedicate himself to Charlotte.

While he was still debating these knotty points he was roused from his reverie by the sound of a light step, which, for the first time, recalled to his recollection that he was still seated in Mr. Fosdyke's garden, and would find it difficult to explain why he had taken up his position there in solitude, if he were found by any of the family. He therefore gently drew back into the darkest corner of the summer-house, whence, while he remained concealed himself, he watched Charlotte walking, apparently in a most unusually pensive mood, through the gardens. He allowed her to be fairly out of sight and hearing, and then he emerged from his hiding-place, passed through the trees that

surrounded it, and leaping the palings that were near soon found himself in the high road. He had no sooner reached this safe ground than he perceived Arthur approaching him. To meet him at that moment was impossible ; so, trusting that he had not been recognised, or that Arthur would suppose he had not himself been seen, he quickly turned down a lane which led directly away from his own house, which he was desirous of reaching, detesting, while he did so, the conduct which forced him thus to fly from his dearest friends.

Next to the severe upbraidings of his own heart, Sir Edward dreaded the open censure or the silent disapprobation of Arthur Fosdyke ; and he strongly suspected that his friend had too clearly guessed the position he had occupied with Anna Marsden not to consider him guilty of great fickleness if he were publicly acknowledged as the suitor of Charlotte. After a while it was this idea which caused him his chief disquietude. Eager to be reconciled to himself, and desirous of silencing the reproaches of his conscience, he soon persuaded himself that Anna's attachment was of no firmer nature than his own. It had always lacked, he

congratulated himself in remembering, the fervour and warmth he had wished to kindle. It was a tranquil regard, he argued, that circumstances had produced, and reflection would soon extinguish. He could not, or would not, believe it was sufficient to cause her to mourn.

Perhaps it was as well that he could lay this "flattering unction to his soul." It could have done no good, but, on the contrary, would have been productive of much sorrow, if he had been capable of comprehending the depth of a woman's heart, and of such a woman as Anna. As he was not worthy of, so he could not understand the strong devoted love which she could and did conceal under a calm exterior. Her heart was too prone to be filled with an earthly affection, and it seemed as if, having too nearly permitted this to be the case, God had thought fit to take from her altogether the object of which she was about to make an idol, and mercifully chosen to take her heart entirely to Himself. It was no unmeaning words she spoke, when she said she thanked Him for having, at the cost of her dearest affections, recalled her from seeking her happiness in this world; and she now hoped

that, unbound by any very close earthly tie, she might serve Him in a life dedicated to prayer and works of mercy. But it must not be supposed that this spirit of acquiescence in God's will, and this power of rejoicing in being subjected to a hard trial, and called to a life of self-denial, was attained without many struggles with herself, and much prayer for aid to bear unrepiningly the lot that was appointed her. She strove to subdue her own feelings, and sought for higher help and support than what she could afford herself, and she had her reward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE morning after Anna's explanation with Sir Edward had taken place, Charlotte's attention at prayers was again distracted by observing that he was not in the church; and while, after the service was over, she was debating with herself whether she should ask Arthur if he knew the reason of his absence, he said,

"I had a note from Belcomb last night to tell me he was going to London for a few days. I suppose it is business that takes him, as his departure is so sudden, and London, I fancy, has but few attractions at this time of year."

Charlotte longed to ask if he had said how long he meant to be absent; but she dared not trust her voice to speak. Anna felt a little nervous movement in the hand that rested on her arm, and guessing the feeling that occasioned it, asked if Sir Edward had mentioned for what length of time he had left them. Arthur, ere he answered in the negative, gave one rapid glance at Anna's countenance, and perceived a blush which his look had caused, and which she was conscious confirmed him in a thought that had now no foundation. The idea that he believed the absence or presence of Sir Edward to be of peculiar personal importance to herself, was painful; but every little circumstance attendant upon their acquaintance was painful, and she too well knew it must be so not to bear it patiently as part of the trial to which she had to submit.

And now for the next few weeks Anna found she had a new task to perform, that of

consoling and supporting her cousin, without in words acknowledging that she understood the cause of her too-visible distress.

Though they had made no confidences to each other, Charlotte did not attempt to conceal from Anna that she was dispirited and unhappy. Sir Edward's conduct was to her perfectly unintelligible.

Why he had left her after having clearly demonstrated his attachment, and that without a syllable of farewell, she could not guess; and though Anna grieved to see her made wretched by doubts and fears, which she had it in her power to clear away, yet she dared not, unlicensed by Sir Edward, impart to her what he had tacitly acknowledged of his attachment to her in their last interview.

At last Sir Edward again suddenly appeared among them, and his old habits of intimacy were resumed. His manner was always kind, and almost affectionate towards Anna; but to Charlotte it was ever varying,—a manner the result of a state of much discomfort in himself, and producing an equal degree of annoyance in her.

Anna could not fail to perceive it, and greatly she desired to be instrumental in

making them happily understand each other; but she scarcely knew how to interfere with propriety. After a while, however, the look of gloom and suffering she saw settle on Sir Edward's countenance, and the sight of Charlotte becoming every day thinner and more pale, made her resolve to depart from her usual practice of refraining from meddling with matters that concerned her not. She was so little used to manœuvring in any way, that it was not without reluctance that she contrived to make Sir Edward walk with her into the garden at a time when she knew Charlotte had taken a book into the summer-house, which had already been the scene of much pleasure and pain. The ostensible reason for asking him once again to walk with her in the east avenue that led to it was, that she might persuade him of the folly, to call it by no harsher name, of his present conduct.

“ You must let me speak to you, Edward,” said she, “ as an old and intimate friend; as your sister would speak if she had been a clear-sighted witness of the events of the last year or two. I need not assure you that if I did not know that you were attached to my dear cousin, I should

not venture to say that your devotion, which has been so marked to her, has not been without its effect. I feel equally sure that the affection which subsisted between you in childhood has with her ripened into a strong attachment, as that the conviction that it is so is essential to your happiness. Why then, dear friend, should you allow any useless regret for what is past, any needless punctilio, to interfere to prevent or delay what is necessary to her happiness, as well as to your own?"

"I have no right to be happy, Anna," replied he mournfully: "I hate myself the moment I feel any approach to it. I cannot endure to contemplate the possibility of it. It is only in being miserable that I can hope to be reconciled to myself."

"Nay, Edward," returned his companion calmly, "you must not talk, and you should endeavour not to think in such a manner: such feelings do not constitute a healthy repentance, even if repentance were needed in your case. We were both foolish, and I have no doubt we have both suffered for our folly; but we shall, I trust, be both permitted to know much of happiness again now. Only," continued she with much

earnestness, "let me warn you, Edward, that if the idea of having caused me some uneasiness has given you much pain, you should not prepare further and deeper anguish for yourself by becoming a source of sorrow to one less able to bear it than I am. I beseech you, by the regard I shall ever feel for you, do not trifle with the happiness of our dear Charlotte. She has entrusted it to you, and you are deeply bound to watch over it: in doing so I am sure you will secure your own."

Sir Edward only replied with a sigh, and they continued for a few moments to walk in silence, until Anna designedly came in front of the summer-house, where Charlotte, as she had expected, was seated, apparently too deeply occupied, though not with the volume which rested unopened on her knee, to hear their approach.

"Lotte, dearest," said Anna in a voice that slightly trembled as she spoke, though that it did so was unperceived by those who heard her, owing to their own still greater emotion; "Lotte, dearest, our friend here seems to have rather an overcharged heart, but it is to you, I think, that he must venture to disburden himself."

She waited to hear no word in reply. For a moment Sir Edward stood silent; he was too totally unprepared for Anna's manœuvre to recover himself at once; but one glance from Charlotte, as she slowly raised her head, and allowed her eye for one inquiring moment to rest upon him, brought him to her side. He had no time to determine whether he would or would not declare to her his love: it was all told and responded to, and he had pressed her to his heart as his own, before he could pause to think.

As Anna turned from them and pursued her walk towards the house, she felt a glow of pleasure to which she had long been a stranger. Very sincerely she rejoiced in thinking that Charlotte, who was as dear to her as a sister, was at length enjoying the happiness of having all her doubts dispelled, and her fears proved vain, by the warm assurance of her lover's affection. At one time Anna had almost thought that in addition to feeling her own hopes of happiness destroyed, she would have the distress of seeing Charlotte a prey to much suffering, which she had not, as had been the case with herself, been inured to bear by the discipline of early trials. This fear was now over.

Charlotte, she doubted not, was being restored to her wonted gaiety of spirit; Sir Edward would once again be looking like himself; and she it was who had accomplished this desired change.

She was seated in their boudoir still considering all that had occurred since her return from Devonshire; for a moment thinking, perhaps with a tinge of sadness, of her own altered prospects, and then more entirely dwelling upon the existence of stricter self-denial which was now before her, when Charlotte hastily rushed into the room, and throwing herself in her arms, exclaimed,

“Oh, Anna! I am the happiest creature in the world. He loves me; he has told me so; and he is now with my father, of whose joyful assent to all we wish I am certain. My dearest friend, I have come to you directly, because I knew you would sympathize in my happiness.”

“Indeed, my dearest Lotte,” said Anna, bending over her, and for a moment successfully endeavouring to conceal her face, “I do most sincerely rejoice in your happiness, and I earnestly hope it may be lasting. But, Lotte, dearest friend, do not let him fill your heart too exclusively; do not let the affection

you feel for him, and which is meant to be your greatest comfort, become sinful."

"Why should you fear that it should, Anna?" replied Charlotte. "If Edward is to be my husband, I cannot love him too entirely."

"Not if your love for him, dearest," returned her cousin, "is kept subordinate to your love for the Almighty Giver of all your blessings. Let Edward have the second place in your heart, and all will go well with you. That God may bless you both—here and hereafter—and give you as much earthly prosperity as is compatible with your eternal welfare, is my earnest constant prayer."

As Anna said these words she gently disengaged herself from Charlotte's still clinging embrace, and sought her own room, where she prayed that, if such was the will of God, she might find her chief earthly enjoyment in watching and rejoicing over the happiness of two beings so dear to her as Sir Edward and her cousin.

All now seemed to go on prosperously with Sir Edward. Mr. Fosdyke received him cordially as his son, and his wife assured him that to no one could she commit the happiness of her cherished daughter with less

anxiety as to the future. Anna offered her congratulations to him in the drawing-room, before the company assembled for dinner, with a tranquil unembarrassed smile, and love and joy danced in Charlotte's eye: but one anxiety remained; Arthur was not among them, nor had he yet been told of what the morning had brought forth. Until this was done, Sir Edward could not feel altogether at his ease. How to announce it to him was now the question. He shrank from the task, though it was one that naturally belonged to him.

"My Lotte," said he to Charlotte, ere they parted for the evening, "your brother has not yet been told of the happiness you have promised me. How will he receive the information?"

"You cannot doubt the pleasure with which he will hear it," returned Charlotte, smiling through her blushes. "Are you not his oldest, dearest friend; almost bound out of your regard to him to take charge of his troublesome sister? Dear Arthur!" continued she in a tone of earnest affection, "I believe his fondest wishes for my happiness will be granted in seeing me given to you."

“And who shall announce to him, dearest,” asked Sir Edward, “that so it is to be? We shall both meet him at the same moment after prayers to-morrow; we cannot walk with him even as far as your gate without letting him know how blessed I am; and, besides, I shall hope to be admitted to your breakfast-table, and he must know why I presume so greatly.”

“Oh, yes,” returned Charlotte, “not for a moment would I wish to keep Arthur in the dark. Can you not to-night, it is not late, call on him as you return home? you will be sure to find him alone, and then to-morrow we shall all meet without any explanation to be made.”

“Not to-night, dearest,” replied Sir Edward, shrinking from so immediately subjecting himself to the calm inquiring glance of Arthur’s eye. “Not to-night, I think: if I were to find him engaged, with any one with him, my appearance unexplained would be awkward; and, moreover, I do not mean to be sent away from here before it is absolutely necessary, and Arthur will not like his household disturbed so late: but to-morrow morning, dearest, we must tell him the secret which I hope soon will be known

to all around us. If I beg Anna to take my arm as we walk from church, could you not tell him what has passed between us? One expressive look from you assuring him that, little as I deserve it, you really love me, would do more to reconcile him to my wishes than any words of mine."

"Why should you fancy, Edward," asked Charlotte in real astonishment, "that he could possibly object? You know how highly he values you personally; and in your worldly position he could wish no improvement for his sister, even if Arthur were a man to dwell upon such a point."

"But remember, Charlotte, how excellent he is," returned Sir Edward, speaking with unfeigned diffidence as he thought of himself as compared to his friend. "If he makes his own conduct the standard of what a man ought to be, how can he consider me fitted for the husband of his sister? I should have a greatly better chance of being welcomed as a brother by him, if I could cast my title and my wealth to the winds, and stand before him a more consistently religious man. I know he regards me with the truest friendship; but I also know, for he does not fail to tell me so, that neither in firmness nor

depth of principle nor steadfastness of conduct do I approach to what he requires."

" You admit that he loves and values you as a friend," returned Charlotte, " and that will make him rejoice to receive you as a brother, even if he thinks it necessary in the position which he holds with respect to you to point out any little instance in which you do not come up to what he, with his very rigid ideas, considers right. But, dear Edward, you must not object to that; you know he does it because he thinks it his duty. He speaks in the same plain manner to every one; even papa, I know, listens to him in a way he never did to Mr. Dampierre."

" I do not fancy, Charlotte," replied her lover, " that I am capable of resenting his reproofs. I respect him for subjecting me to them, and only receive them with too much deference, and am too well persuaded that I merit them, to like to ask him myself to sanction my addresses to you. If the doing so be not painful to you, I wish you would spare me the task, dearest Lotte."

" Willingly, then, will I undertake it," returned Charlotte, blushing. " It will cost me but a moment's embarrassment: and now you must go. See, mama is putting up her

knitting, and casting a side-long glance of affection at the bed-candles."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next morning, as Sir Edward had predicted, the four friends met as usual outside the church to return to Fosdyke Lodge together. Charlotte scarcely allowed Arthur a moment in which to speak his ordinary greeting before she took his arm and led him a little aside from the others. Sir Edward, in silence, offered his arm to Anna, who took it also without speaking. The mind of both was occupied by the same subject—how Arthur would receive the intimation that Charlotte was now making to him. They both felt that he had guessed more truly than any other of their surrounding friends that that had occurred between them which rendered it passing strange, that Sir Edward should now be the acknowledged lover of his sister. They both rejoiced in thinking that he would no longer be deceived

in his expectations, and both felt thankful that the communication was not to be made in their immediate presence. So far there was much sympathy of feeling between them, but it was not of a nature to render them communicative ; and they had begun to find their prolonged silence growing rather painful before it was broken by their being joined by the others.

Charlotte's abrupt manner of seizing her brother's arm the moment he reached them shewed him that she had something she was more than usually eager to impart, though she apparently found some difficulty in selecting proper words in which to convey it.

" Well, Charlotte," said he, after waiting an instant, " what is it you have to say ? I am all attention."

" I suppose you will not be very much surprised, Arthur," returned she ; " I dare say you can guess what I have to tell you."

" No, indeed," replied Arthur, smiling. " You give me credit for more penetration than I possess. I see I am about to receive some weighty communication, but of what nature I have no notion."

" Then I must tell you, I suppose," said

Charlotte, determined to plunge at once into the subject. "Sir Edward has—has been talking to me, and papa and mama have given their consent."

"Belcomb has proposed to you, Lotte? Is that what you mean?" asked Arthur, looking at her a moment in undisguised surprise.

"Yes," returned she, with a degree of confusion that prevented her from noticing the look that her brother gave her. "We both wished you to know it at once."

"May God bless you, my dearest Charlotte," replied he, with much deep feeling, "and enable you to be a blessing and a support to each other through life. Let me now congratulate Edward upon having won a true and affectionate heart; and I must tell him, too, with what confidence I shall see my sister committed to his care."

And he spoke truly: though, as Sir Edward had himself said, there was much in his character that he wished to see deepened—some few traits that he could desire to see changed; yet he esteemed him as an honest, pure-hearted man, and he had long loved him with the affection of a brother.

At first Charlotte's announcement had

greatly startled him, and he felt bewildered. He did not understand how it could be as she affirmed, for so many months he had not doubted the affection that subsisted between his friend and Anna. He thought he had seen the commencement, and watched the ripening of it, but it seemed he was mistaken. Some feeling in his own heart had, perhaps, led him astray at first; and for the last two years he knew his time and thoughts had been too exclusively engrossed by his own immediate duties for him to have been a very keen observer of other people.

That he had been totally and entirely mistaken, then, was the conclusion to which his moment's meditation brought him. He had no time for longer thought—for recalling to his mind the numberless tokens of Sir Edward's love for Anna, and the many though slight indications of the feeling with which she used to receive them, which had before so convinced him that his suspicions were well founded,

“I suppose, my dear Belcomb,” said he, returning with Charlotte still on his arm towards their friends, who had lingered a little on the road, and extending his hand

cordially to Sir Edward—"I suppose I must plead guilty to great blindness and inattention if I confess that I had not been prepared for the news Lotte has this moment given me; but though I had not expected, yet I heartily rejoice at it. I need not tell you that you will have my most earnest prayers for your happiness together, and that I shall perform my part in uniting you with the most heartfelt satisfaction, trusting that you may both ever remember that you are not bound alone to contribute to each other's welfare in this life, but to assist and encourage each other in attaining a better inheritance hereafter."

Sir Edward heard him with considerable emotion. He returned the warm pressure of his hand, but made no answer. He felt he was not worthy of the confidence with which his professions of attachment had been received, and he almost wished he had met with the inquiry and reproof from Arthur which he had so dreaded to encounter. He could not help asking himself with what feeling was Anna listening to this assurance of satisfaction in hearing of his addresses to one so cherished as Charlotte was by her family. Apparently without emotion; as

she it was who was first able to break the silence which followed Arthur's words. They were all grateful to her for doing so, and they all understood from it that she, though feeling all that belonged to an attached friend, was greatly less interested in the affair than any of the others, and more than one rejoiced at this evidence that it was so.

Sir Edward, as he had hoped, was allowed to breakfast at the Lodge, after which he beguiled Charlotte into taking a long stroll through the falling leaves in the shrubberies; and then he obtained a permission he had frequently before longed for, but which was now for the first time granted him, that of entering the pretty little room peculiarly dedicated to the young ladies. Often and often during the last two years had he envied Arthur the privilege he had so little used of late, of presenting himself unbidden at the door of this apartment; and now that he was himself admitted, he found the enjoyment of being there, though derived from a different source, as great as he had anticipated.

He had passed a very happy hour or two there, when the door was opened by Anna Marsden, who had fancied that Sir Edward and her cousin had gone into the drawing-

room upon their return from their walk. She was therefore somewhat startled at finding them in possession of the room which she had supposed empty, and, upon the impulse of the moment, she was going to withdraw.

"Come in, Anna," said Sir Edward, rising, and taking her by the hand. "Charlotte knows everything. I could not be happy while any passage in my life remained concealed from her. She has now listened to my history of the past months, and she forgives me, and loves me still."

"I think you have acted wisely," answered Anna, who, by a strong determination to appear tranquil, subdued all appearance of emotion. "Between persons connected, as I trust you will soon be, there should be no concealments; and such little confessions as you have had to make," continued she, with a slight smile, "are better made before marriage than after. But, dear friends, you must not keep me now, for I know you can be happy without me."

Charlotte silently pressed her cousin's hand, which she had taken as soon as it was relinquished by Sir Edward. She cast one short glance towards Anna's face, but quickly

withdrew her eyes, fearing that she might read there that she had unwittingly been the cause of much sorrow to her. Had she permitted herself to look she would have found no trace of what she feared to see. The whole expression of Anna's countenance was calm and tranquil. Sir Edward's announcement of having confided to Charlotte what had occurred between them startled and distressed her for a moment in a manner that only a strong effort could prevent her from permitting to be visible ; but, never wont to dwell upon her own feelings, and what would be most soothing to them, she quickly felt how desirable it was for their own future comfort that they should treat each other with perfect openness ; and she would have been the first to desire that no wish to spare her might interfere with their doing so. To hear Sir Edward say that he had told Charlotte that she had, with the devotion of her whole heart, returned a sentiment which he had entertained during a few short months for her, and to acknowledge without visible emotion that he had acted right and wisely in so doing, was an additional pang that she felt called on to bear, and she therefore endured it without murmuring. To remain

with them and talk about it she did not feel to be a duty, and therefore she left them in the enjoyment of knowing that they had not a thought concealed from each other, to take refuge in her own room, where she prayed she might have such command over herself as would prevent either of them from discovering how great an effort it cost her to tear from her heart a feeling that she could no longer innocently retain.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

No obstacle now stood in the way of Sir Edward's perfect happiness with Charlotte. The few weeks that intervened before their marriage could take place was spent in most enjoyable devotion to her ; while every passing hour in which he watched Anna's calm and cheerful demeanour, as she superintended all the arrangements for her cousin's wedding, convinced him that her attachment for him had never been of a nature capable of making his happiness or of marring her own.

Charlotte, too, found infinite relief in sharing his opinions on this point. As to Anna herself she experienced the tranquil satisfaction that is always met with in a determined forgetfulness of self, and a resolute attempt to fulfil allotted duties. As she stood as bridesmaid by her cousin's side, and heard the words spoken that gave her as a wife to Sir Edward, she had, in the most secret corner of her heart, no wish that it should be otherwise. She had never doubted that the blessing God had thought fit to withdraw from her was one that it was good for her to be without, and in that conviction she had acquiesced unmurmuringly in His appointment; but after she had thus given proof of her obedient resignation, she had learnt to perceive with her own judgment that Sir Edward's was not a character firm or consistent enough to have rendered her happy as his wife. She had loved truly and fervently, but it was not Sir Edward: it was the qualities of her own imagination with which she had invested him. When she considered him abstractedly, as unconnected with herself, and uninfluenced by any professed affection for her, she could not but acknowledge that, though

amiable and agreeable, he did not possess those higher qualities to which she had attached herself. Her love, therefore, passed away. It was as if buried in the tomb. Her regard for him as an agreeable, estimable friend—her interest in him as Charlotte's husband, remained in full force, but all warmer feeling was extinguished, never again to be kindled in her heart by mortal man. Her beauty, her excellence, her charming manners, and perhaps her good fortune procured for her many suitors and more admirers, but no one obtained more favour than the others—all met the same gentle repulse. As she had told Sir Edward, she was not a woman who could love twice; and she had loved truly once, though the object was but the creature of her own fancy. She remained a constant inmate of Fosdyke Lodge, supplying to her friends there the place of a daughter; and though she never knew the heavy hereditary debt that rested with her to discharge, others better versed in the bygone history of Chollerton than herself were wont to say that Anna Marsden had, by the joy her presence gave in that house, made full amends for all the woe wrought there by Anna Fludyer. Nor was

the benefit of her residence confined to Fosdyke Lodge alone. All Chollerton felt the influence of her desire to make her life pass away in works of kindness and of mercy to those around her. She continued the cherished friend of both the master and the mistress of the Hall. She was the godmother of their first-born child; and her spirit gave a tone to the system of education that was pursued there, that it would never have obtained without her. As an assistant to Arthur in his parochial duties she was invaluable. She was personally acquainted with all the poor in the place, not only with them individually, but with their histories, their wants, and difficulties. She went constantly among them, acting strictly in obedience to his directions; never meddling in their spiritual concerns, in which she had no authority to interfere, but dispensing his alms and her own as her feminine tact suggested, and he thought fit to sanction. Her time was fully occupied, and her heart satisfied, in being the dearly-loved friend of many around her; and we may believe that her life was spent in as much tranquil happiness and freedom from anxiety and regret as belong to most people. Every year that

passed over her head made her feel more strongly the necessity and value of strict self-denial and undeviating obedience to our Church's rule; and every conquest over herself pointed out to her another yet demanding to be made, while each success made the next the easier.

Arthur remained still labouring in that portion of his Lord's vineyard where he had first been placed, rejoicing in watching over the increasing efforts and success in leading a life of holiness in one whom he so deeply valued, whilst he often found his difficulties lessened by her obedient and sensible assistance, and always felt, in the midst of much ungratefully received toil, supported by the conviction that earnest prayer for the welfare of himself and the efficacy of his labours was daily offered by her. He too felt very thankful for being permitted to see the continued happiness of his sister, and to watch over the education of her children in his double capacity of their pastor and their uncle. Thus united in their duties and in the objects of their affections, Anna Marsden and Arthur Fosdyke passed as happy, nay, we may venture to affirm a far happier and more tranquil life, than if he had not strug-

gled against and subdued a feeling unsuited to the exclusive devotion to his sacred duties to which he had dedicated himself, or if the fulfilment of her first youthful wishes had been granted to her.

THE END.

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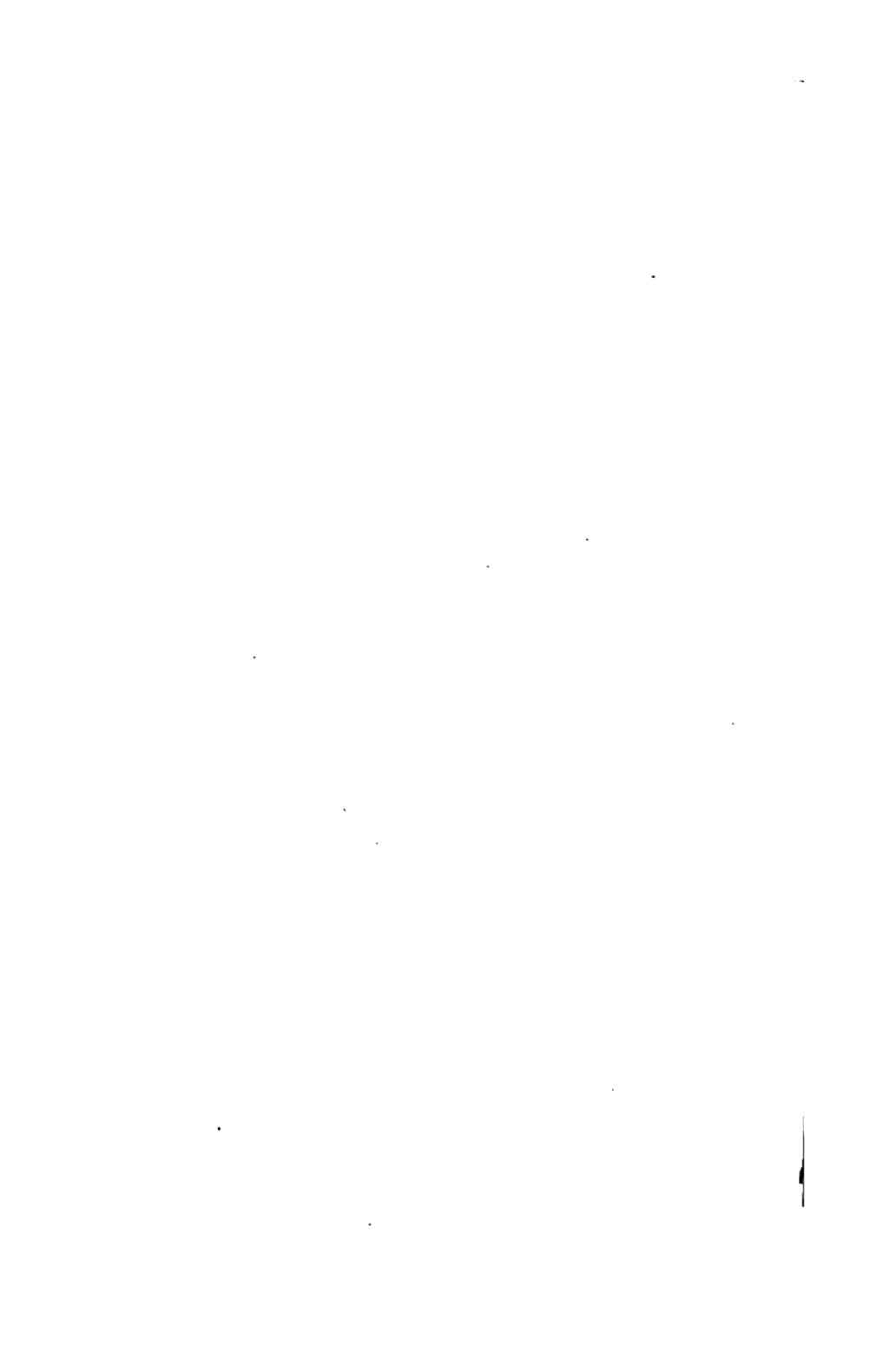
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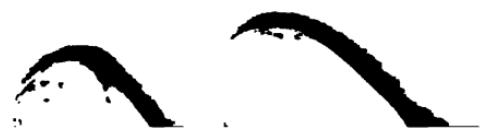
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